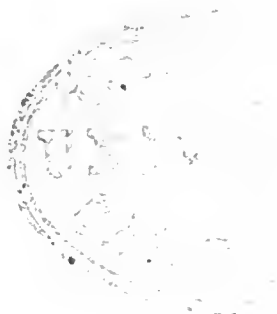


JANE AUSTEN AND HER WORKS.





JANE AUSTEN

& HER WORKS



by



SARAH TYTLER.



Steventon Rectory, Hants

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LONDON, PARIS & NEW YORK.

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JANE AUSTEN.

AND HER WORKS.

BY

SARAH TYTLER.

WITH A PORTRAIT ON STEEL.



CASSELL, PETTER, GALPIN & CO.:

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1880

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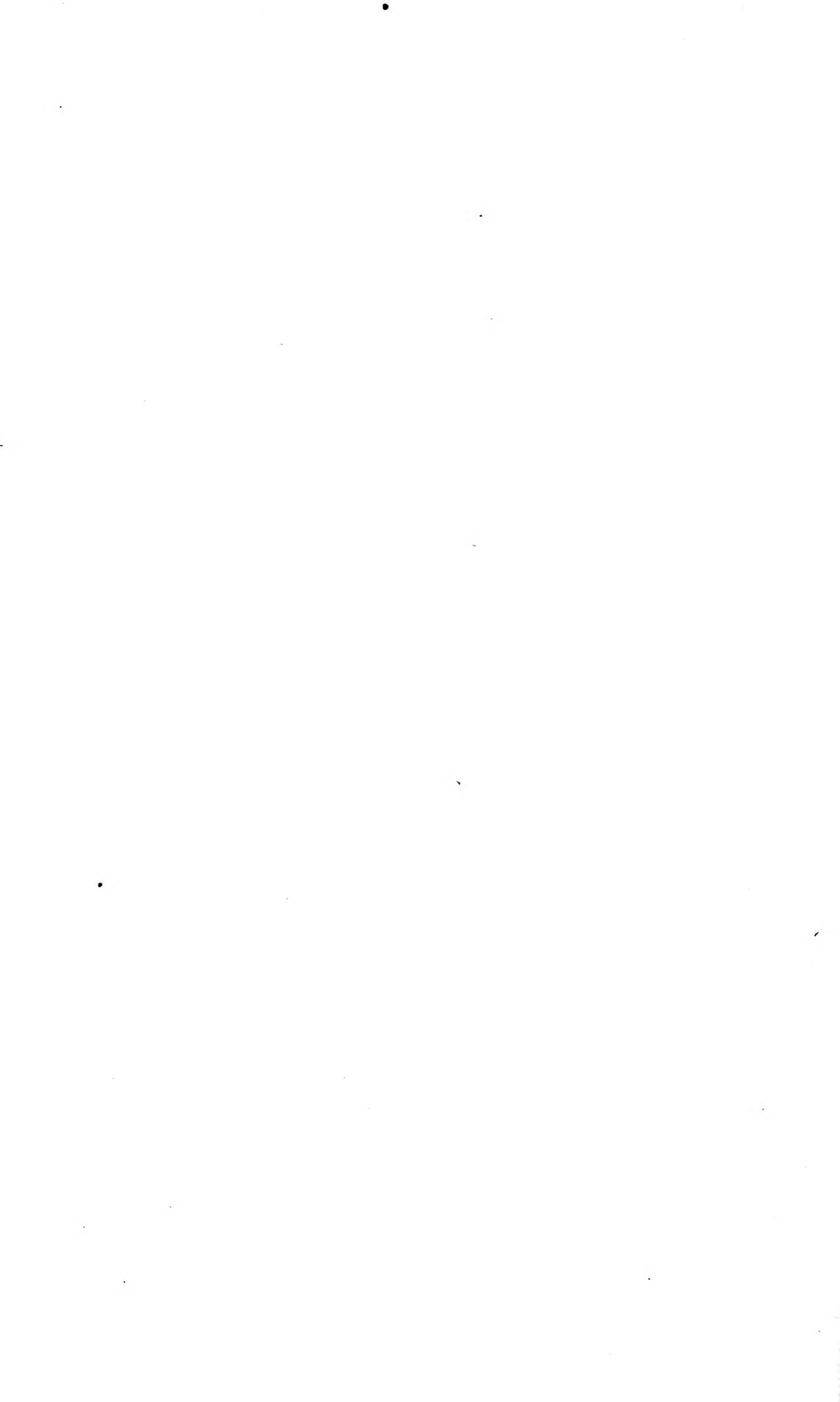
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P R E F A C E.



My intention in this book is to present in one volume to an over-wrought, and in some respects over-read, generation of young people the most characteristic of Jane Austen's novels, together with her life. I think the tales and the life are calculated to reflect light on each other; I think, also, that the arrangement of the tales—which I have selected as the author wrote them, and not as they happened to be published, particularly in reference to the fact that the two which I have given first were written more than ten years before “Emma” and “Persuasion”—is an advantage, in permitting the growth of the author's mind and taste to be recognised. I have used my own judgment in the selection of the stories, and in the degree and manner in which I have condensed them. It is with reverent hands that I have touched these great English novels, for the purpose of bringing them into such compass as may make them readily accessible to all, and especially to young readers, apt to be wearied by the slightest diffuseness. Wherever it has been possible, in view of my aim, I have used the author's own words, as incomparably the best for the characters and situations. I have pointed out here and there the great changes in

social standards, customs and fashions since Jane Austen wrote; while it is her glory that the human nature in her books and the human nature in every generation are the same. I have occasionally called attention to an unrivalled piece of art, which a too eager or an inexperienced reader may be in danger of overlooking.

So far from presuming to wish to draw readers from Jane Austen's novels in their complete form, it is my earnest desire to send many a young student who may be tempted to quench her intellectual thirst at sources utterly unworthy of the great English novelist, to the originals of the tales I have abridged.

I have much pleasure in acknowledging the obligation I owe to Mr. Austen Leigh, Jane Austen's nephew, who, with tender and reverent care, gathered together and recorded all the particulars that remained of her personal and family history. I have drawn solely and largely from this biography, which is, indeed, the only authorised memoir of the author.

* * * The portrait which, by the kindness of the Austen Leigh family and Mr. Bentley, we are enabled to put as the frontispiece to this work, has the interest of being a faithful copy of the only portrait that was ever taken of Jane Austen, a rough sketch made by her sister Cassandra, and afterwards touched by the hand of a professional artist, and while it cannot claim to be a perfect portrait, it is considered by those who have seen and known the great novelist to be a fairly good likeness of her.

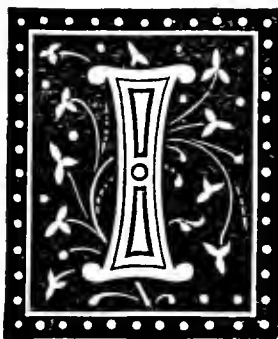


JANE AUSTEN AND HER WORKS.



JANE AUSTEN.

I.



It is said there is an ancient tradition in the East, that close on a certain date of the year are born the men to whom are given special gifts to enlighten and delight their fellow-creatures. To, or near to, this date we can assign the birthdays of William Caxton, by the invention of printing the father of widely-diffused learning; William Shakespeare, with his marvellous knowledge of human nature; Cervantes, the great humourist; and William Wordsworth, to whom skies and hills, trees and flowers, beasts and birds, had a voice, and told a story which he could make plain to the duller comprehension of thousands. But no Oriental sage had a word to say in anticipation of the birthday—at a very different season of the year—when there looked out for the first time on the world and its wonders, the child-eyes of a woman who was to edify and charm some of the wisest men of her own and succeeding generations.

Women may well be proud of the woman who has

been held, on high authority, second only to Shakespeare in the comprehension of the springs which move the heart.

Girls may well be proud of the girl who, strange to say, wrote two of her masterpieces, "Pride and Prejudice" and "Northanger Abbey," before she had completed her twenty-third year. When other girls were practising their music and working at their embroidery, having their youthful gaieties and youthful dreams, Jane Austen, who was fair to see and charming to listen to, who practised her music, sewed at her worsted-work, joined in gatherings of young people, and had her morning visions with the best, possessed in addition the power, and found the time, to accomplish those wonders of fiction which, for their subtle reproduction of character, and exquisite weaving of a web so like that of the common lot, have been the instruction and solace—not of companion girls alone, but of statesmen and historians, philosophers and poets, down to the present day.

Both men and women may be proud of the woman who did this great thing, yet who never forfeited a tittle of her womanliness; who was essentially as good, true, and dear, as devoted to home, as cherished in its narrow circle, as the most obscure of her sisters, who are nothing to the world while they are everything to their own people.

The slight yet not unsatisfactory record of Jane Austen's life came late to literature, after most of the materials which might have supplied a fuller memoir had been destroyed, and nearly every contemporary recollection of her was lost. The relatives who were left to accomplish a biography of the "Aunt Jane" whose personal kindness had made so deep an impression on them half a century before, and of whose permanent and still-increasing fame they have remained justly proud, were more or less elderly people, and were not writers like the subject of the biography. But any disadvantages which exist are not without their ample

compensation in the affectionate simplicity and pathos of the narrative.

Jane Austen was born a hundred and four years ago, on December 16th, 1775, at the parsonage house of Steventon, in Hampshire. The Austens were a Kent family, originally one of those aristocratic clothworkers who, possessing landed property in the Weald, did not disdain to work in wool, and who were generally known as "the Greycoats of Kent." Mr. Austen Leigh, Jane Austen's nephew, writes that a trace of the family origin survives in the family livery of light blue and white, called "Kentish Grey."

Jane Austen's father, an orphan, brought up by an uncle, a lawyer in Tunbridge, was, in succession, a scholar at Tunbridge School, a fellow of St. John's, Oxford, and rector of the two livings of Deane and Steventon, Hampshire villages little more than a mile apart, and numbering a united population of not more than three hundred.

The young rector married Cassandra Leigh, a daughter of the incumbent of Harpenden, near Henley-on-the-Thames. The Leighs were a Warwickshire family, descended, on the mother's side, from the Chandos house. Jane Austen's grand-uncle, Dr. Theophilus Leigh, was Master of Balliol College for upwards of half a century. I mention him because he was a man famous in his day for ready repartee, and it is possible his wit may have descended to his grand-niece Jane.

For thirty years the Austens resided at Steventon; and there Jane Austen spent, for the most part, the first twenty-five years of her life, in a quiet country circle, certainly not without its cultured members, among whom was her father, a scholarly and accomplished man.

When Mr. and Mrs. Austen were still a young couple, they were entrusted with the charge of a son of Warren Hastings, but the child died in infancy; otherwise we might have had a long train of life-like

Anglo-Indians in fiction, many years before they were conjured into existence by Thackeray.

The next parish to Steventon was Ashe, of which the clergyman then happened to be Dr. Russell, grandfather of Mary Russell Mitford.

The Rev. George Austen was so good-looking a man, from youth to age, as to have been called "the handsome proctor" at Oxford, and to be still noticed at Bath, when he was over seventy years of age, on account of his fine features and abundance of snow-white hair. I have already said he was a man of ability. He directed the studies of all his children, and increased his income by the practice, usual with clergymen, of taking pupils. Mrs. Austen was also reputed a clever woman, endowed with a lively imagination, in addition to much good sense.

Jane Austen's biographer says rightly, the members of her own family were so much to her, and the rest of the world so little, that a brief sketch of her brothers and sister is necessary, to furnish a complete idea of her life. He remarks elsewhere, in alluding to the retirement in which she generally dwelt, that she had probably never been in company with anybody of greater literary ability and reputation than herself. In these observations, he touches inadvertently on what I think formed the root of the defects—to which I shall refer afterwards—in an otherwise fine character.

Jane Austen had five brothers and one sister. James, the eldest of the family, and the father of Jane's biographer, is described as well read in English literature, writing readily and happily both in prose and verse. When yet a young man at Oxford, he originated a periodical called the "Loiterer," and by his example may have turned Jane's attention to authorship. He was a clergyman, and succeeded his father at Steventon. Edward Austen was early adopted by his cousin, Mr. Knight, of Godmersham Park, in Kent, and Chawton House, in Hampshire. He adopted the name of Knight, and was, like Frank Churchill in

“Emma,” a good deal separated from his family in their youth. But it was to his neighbourhood, and to the support of his position as the squire of the parish, that the women of the Austen family returned at last. This brother Edward is said to have been full of amiability and fun. He seems to have borne some resemblance in his character, as well as in his circumstances, to the Frank Churchill of Jane’s story.

Henry Austen was a good talker, but he was the least successful of the brothers. While he resided in London, he appears to have been the literary authority, and the means of communication between his sister Jane and her publishers.

Francis and Charles Austen were both sailors, and both lived to become admirals. Francis possessed a firm temper and a strong sense of duty. He was distinguished by his religious principles at a time when a religious profession was rare in the service. At one station he was pointed out as “the officer who knelt in church.” Charles—specially beloved in his family for the sweet temper and affectionate disposition which resembled Jane’s—was, on one occasion, seven consecutive years absent from England on active service. He died of cholera in the course of the Burmese war, Lord Dalhousie expressing his admiration of the staunch, high spirit which, notwithstanding his age (seventy-four) and previous sufferings, had led the admiral to take his part in the trying service that closed his career.

Cassandra Austen was three years Jane’s senior. The warmest affection subsisted between the two, Jane, in her maturity and fame, continuing to look up to her elder sister, a beautiful, staid, thoughtful woman from her girlhood. When Cassandra was sent to the school of a Mrs. Latourville (probably a French *émigrée*), in the Forbury of Reading, Jane went with her, not because she was old enough, but because she would have been miserable without her sister, her mother observing “that if Cassandra were going to have her head cut off, Jane would insist on sharing her fate.”

Steventon was one of those villages and parsonages which Jane Austen so often described. "It was situated among the low chalk hills and winding lanes of North Hants. The parsonage house stood in a shallow valley, surrounded by sloping meadows well sprinkled with elm-trees, at the end of a small village of cottages, each provided with a garden, scattered about prettily on either side of the road." Within the house, though it was reckoned rather above the average of the parsonages of its day, no cornice marked the junction of wall and ceiling, while the beams which supported the upper floors projected into the rooms below in all their naked simplicity, covered only by a coat of paint or whitewash. About five years after Jane Austen's death, her old home at Steventon was pulled down.

"At the front of the house was a carriage-drive through turf and trees. On the south side the ground rose gently, and was occupied by an old-fashioned garden, in which flowers and vegetables kept each other company, flanked on the east by a thatched mud wall, and overshadowed by fine elms. Along the upper side of the garden ran a terrace of fine turf, where Jane in her childhood might have emulated young Catherine Morland in rolling down the green slope."

Mr. Austen Leigh says the chief beauty of Steventon was in its hedgerows—borders of copsewood and timber, often wide enough to contain a winding footpath or rough cart-track. "There the earliest primroses, anemones, and wild hyacinths were to be found, the first bird's-nest, and sometimes an unwelcome adder." Two such hedgerows radiated from the parsonage garden. One, a continuation of the turf terrace, ran westward, and formed the boundary of the home meadows. It was made into a rustic shrubbery, with occasional seats, and was called, in the sentimental language of the day, "the Wood Walk." No doubt Jane Austen often strolled or sat there, alone, or with her sister, or one of her brothers. She might carry there her little work-box, or the volume of "Evelina," or "Cecilia," the

“Mysteries of Udolpho,” or the “Romance of the Forest,” which she was devouring. It was to such a shrubbery or “wilderness” that she sent Elizabeth Bennet to seek her father—to read an important letter—or to hold her famous interview with Lady Catherine de Bourgh.

The other hedgerow bore the name of “the Church Walk,” because it climbed the hill to the parish church, near which, surrounded by sycamores, was a manor-house of Henry VIII.’s time, tenanted for upwards of a hundred years by a yeoman family bearing the appropriate name of Digweed.

The little church without a spire, with its narrow early English windows, is said to have been upwards of seven hundred years old.* Sweet violets, purple and white, grew in profusion beneath the south wall. The churchyard had its hollow yew coeval with the church, its old elms and thorns among its mossy stones and green mounds.

We hear many regrets in our day for the demolition of the old church of Haworth, in which the Brontë family worshipped, that may very likely be followed by the destruction of the old parsonage house. Jane Austen’s admirers, though they are choice spirits and cannot be denied the merit of fidelity, have not been so enthusiastic. I do not know that one protesting voice was raised when the iconoclast’s changes and improvements reached the peaceful old parish. I am not sure whether many pilgrims ever sought that birthplace, and as to those who have visited the grave in Winchester Cathedral, we have Mr. Austen Leigh’s authority for the statement that they drew from the verger the puzzled inquiry—what was there particular about the lady buried there that people should come and ask to see her resting-place? No: Jane Austen and her work must always be regarded in one of two lights—that of quiet

* My readers may remember the old church at Kellynch, which was mentioned by Charles Musgrove as an apology to Captain Benwick for visiting the village.

though intense appreciation, or that of puzzled non-comprehension.

The large family at Steventon were worthy, prosperous, and happy. They had in some respects the position and privileges of the family of the principal squire, as well as the rector of the parish, since the Rev. George Austen represented the absentee cousin, of whom the clergyman's second son was the adopted son and heir. The Austens kept a carriage and pair of horses, and lived in a style equal to that of the neighbouring county gentry, whose near relatives or intimate friends the household at the parsonage were. In reckoning up the special advantages of such a home in one of her novels, Jane Austen lays stress on its being well connected, "a well connected parsonage."

Among the most frequent visitors at Steventon were two families of cousins, who could both of them bring fresh experiences to the country parsonage. The one family, the Coopers, lived in the brilliant Bath of their generation, where Cassandra and Jane Austen, as young women, visited their relations long before they ever thought of Bath as a residence for themselves. Jane was still able to enjoy the gay watering-place with the keen appetite of a country-bred girl, and it is these vivid reminiscences which she transfers to the pages of "Northanger Abbey," while she reserves the much more sober, rather adverse estimate of later years for the concluding chapters of "Persuasion." One of these cousins, Jane Austen's dear friend and namesake, was married from her uncle's house at Steventon to a captain in the navy, under whom Charles Austen served. A few years afterwards, this favourite cousin was suddenly killed in a carriage accident.

Another cousin had been brought up in Paris, and had married a Count de Feuillade, who was guillotined during the French Revolution. His widow escaped through many perils, took refuge in her uncle's parsonage of Steventon, and ended by marrying her cousin Henry Austen, with whom she went to France, during the short Peace of Amiens, in 1802, and narrowly

escaped being detained among the unfortunate English prisoners of war, by Napoleon.

Thus the quiet Hampshire parsonage was not entirely without its excitements, in addition to the arrivals and departures of its sailor sons, the naval battles and sieges in which they were engaged, the ship-intelligence which was always eagerly scanned on their behalf. Had the future author been so disposed, she might have found in the conversation and adventures of her cousin and sister-in-law materials for novels which would have been more to the taste of a large section of the public than Jane Austen's perfect tales. As it was, the chief immediate results of the young widowed countess's stay at Steventon, when Jane Austen was just entering on her teens, were the improvement of the family French, and the performance of amateur theatricals in a summer theatre in the barn and a winter theatre in the little dining-room. Out of these theatricals Jane Austen made stock for "Mansfield Park," in which, by the way, she infers decided disapproval of the amusement. Whether or not the real theatricals led to the attachment and engagement of Henry Austen and Madame de Feuillade we may conjecture, but cannot ascertain from Mr. Austen Leigh's narrative.

Jane Austen's biographer writes of the Austens' long stay at Steventon as having remained unshadowed by any serious family misfortune or death. But one great disaster, which, though it did not concern Jane directly, touched her nearly, befell a member of the family. Cassandra Austen, more regularly beautiful than Jane, wise for her years, and good, was engaged to be married to a young clergyman who had a prospect of early preferment from a nobleman, his relative and friend. The two men went together to the West Indies, the one to act for a time as chaplain to the regiment of the other. Very soon the chaplain died of yellow fever. The melancholy news, descending like a thunderbolt on the cheerful Hampshire parsonage, brought great grief to Cassandra Austen, and Jane was certain to suffer with her sister.

II.

In person Jane Austen seems to have borne considerable resemblance to her two favourite heroines, Elizabeth Bennet and Emma Woodhouse. Jane, too, was tall and slender, a brunette, with a rich colour—altogether “the picture of health” which Emma Woodhouse was said to be. In minor points, Jane Austen had a well-formed though somewhat small nose and mouth, round as well as rosy cheeks, bright hazel eyes, and brown hair, falling in natural curls about her face.

With regard to her knowledge and accomplishments, Jane Austen was well acquainted with the English history and literature of her day. When very young she was an ardent partisan of Mary, Queen of Scots, and Charles I., though one may be tolerably sure she modified her views in later years. She read the Queen Anne essayists and their followers. She was a warm admirer of the works of Johnson, Crabbe, and Cowper. Of Crabbe she said jestingly, in reference to the author—not the man, whom she had not seen—that if she ever married at all she could fancy herself Mrs. Crabbe. She knew Richardson’s novels almost by heart. She had great pleasure in Sir Walter Scott’s poetry. Of his novels, only “Waverley,” “Guy Mannering,” and “The Antiquary” had come out before her death. She has expressed more than once in her tales her lively appreciation of the novels of Mrs. Radcliffe, Madame d’Arblay, and Miss Edgeworth.

As to foreign languages and literature, Jane Austen had a considerable knowledge of French, and a slight acquaintance with Italian. In music she could play and sing pleasantly, with much the same degree of proficiency that she attributed to Elizabeth Bennet and Emma Woodhouse. Jane was accustomed to practise her music before breakfast, with the laudable purpose of not disturbing other members of the family

less musically inclined. She would sing of an evening, when required, simple old songs to her own accompaniment. She was fond of dancing, and danced very well, like several of her own heroines, and like her sister-author, Anna Maria Porter.

Jane Austen was exceedingly neat-handed, with a quick eye and a firm grasp. Her handwriting was at once strong and fine, as well as very legible,* I should say, in broad contrast to what may be called "the Italian hand"—an overflow of characterless elegance which belonged to the generation. She sewed and embroidered, as she did everything else, with exquisite finish. She was great in satin-stitch. She spent much of her time in sewing—not being above making her own clothes, as well as those of the poor. She was an adept in any of the old-fashioned games founded on dexterity of hand, such as spillikins, and cup and ball. She liked to play at such games when unable to read and write long at a time, from weakness and weariness in those bright, searching eyes of hers.

The great novelist was very fond of children, and much beloved by them, like Anna Maria Porter again. She could tell no end of fairy stories, was the make-believe visitor in the children's make-believe houses, and readily improvised for her young listeners' benefit.

Jane Austen was not without suitors, whom her independent spirit, absorption in her family, and quiet reserve could not repel. Her descendants were aware of addresses paid to her by one gentleman who had every recommendation of character, connections, and position, to whom nothing was wanting save the lady's favour. There is also the lingering recollection of a sorrowful little romance, bearing a resemblance to that of her sister Cassandra, in connection with the brilliant, witty, successful author. It was told by Cassandra Austen to her young relatives long after Jane's death.

* We are reminded of the discussion on handwriting, and the praise of Emma Woodhouse's handwriting in "Emma."

The two girls, while spending some weeks during their youth at a seaside place, became acquainted with a gentleman whose attractions of person, mind, and manners made even Cassandra think him worthy of Jane, and likely to win her. When the young people parted, the new friend expressed his intention of soon seeing the sisters again, and Cassandra at least had no doubt of his motives; but the second meeting never took place. The sisters heard, not long afterwards, of the gentleman's sudden death, and with him perished, in Cassandra Austen's opinion, her sister Jane's solitary, short love-dream.

III.

Jane Austen wrote stories, in addition to all manner of quips and cranks, impromptu verses, and mocking stanzas, from her childhood upwards. In admitting the childish practice, after she was a middle-aged woman, she called it an innocent amusement, but a waste of time which, as she had found to her regret, might have been more profitably employed. She had accumulated numerous copies, full of such stories—for the most part burlesques of the melodramatic extravagances of other writers—by the time she was sixteen. The published story which is nearest to this style is "Northanger Abbey." She seems to have completed two stories, which were not parodies, between the age of sixteen and twenty. Both of these were in the old-fashioned form of letters. One of them she re-wrote, in another shape, and it was ultimately published under the title of "Sense and Sensibility." The other, "Lady Susan," was only published along with the little memoir of the author, nine years ago.

Two among her masterpieces were written between her twenty-first and twenty-third years. "Pride and Prejudice," named originally "First Impressions," was written in ten months, between 1796 and 1797; "Sense and Sensibility," the reproduction from the earlier story, in letters, called "Ellinor and Marianne," occupied the author between 1797 and 1798; but "Northanger Abbey," which holds a place beside "Pride and Prejudice," was written also in 1798.

Jane Austen wrote with the knowledge and approval of her father and mother and the rest of her family. There is still in existence a letter written by Mr. Austen and addressed to Mr. Cadell, in November, 1797, immediately after the completion of "Pride and Prejudice." The father simply states that he has in his possession a MS. novel in three volumes, about the length of Miss Burney's "Evelina." He asks whether Mr. Cadell would choose to be concerned in bringing it out, what would be the expense of publishing if at the author's risk, and what the publisher would venture to advance for the copyright if, on perusal, it was approved of.

The proposal was declined by return of post, more from excess of caution than from erring criticism, since the MS. was never in the publisher's hands. It is almost needless to say that the rejected novel has been considered the best, as it is unquestionably among the best, of English novels.

"Pride and Prejudice" was not published till sixteen years after it had been composed; "Sense and Sensibility," the first published of Jane Austen's novels, not for thirteen years after the first time it was re-written. "Northanger Abbey" was the first sold of these earlier novels, but it cannot be considered more lucky than its predecessors. Its fate was, if possible, still more mortifying. It was disposed of to a publisher in Bath for the modest sum of ten pounds, five years after it was written, and two years before the death of Jane Austen's father. It lay ignominiously in a drawer in the shop of its purchaser for many years. At last it was bought

back for the sum originally given, by one of the author's brothers, who, when the transaction was finished, triumphantly informed the dilatory publisher that he had just re-sold a work by the well-known author of "Pride and Prejudice." "Northanger Abbey," on which Lord Macaulay set such store, was not brought out till 1818, after Jane Austen's death, when it appeared together with her last story, "Persuasion," just twenty years from the date at which the former novel was written. Surely, few young authors have had to suffer greater and more prolonged disappointment in finding a publisher and a public. The experience may serve as a consolation to all struggling literary aspirants. On the other hand we may seek generation after generation of authors doomed to obscurity, temporary or permanent, before we find another Jane Austen. Of a nephew and a niece of the author's who took to youthful novel-writing in their aunt's lifetime, and received all indulgence and encouragement from their kinswoman, it is recorded that neither of their novels ever saw the light; yet we might have said of them that they had novel-writing in the blood. One of them wrote with the inspiring association of dwelling in Steventon Parsonage, the other received invaluable hints and suggestions from a mistress of her art; but it was all of no avail.

It is said that Jane Austen bore her early literary disappointments very philosophically. She did not write for money; her father was in easy circumstances. She might not then anticipate fame—though she was far from undervaluing her powers—and she did not over-rate the worth of a literary reputation; still I can scarcely comprehend the equanimity of a very young woman remaining entirely unshaken by the unbroken train of undeserved failures and rebuffs. There is one thing that I feel sure Jane Austen must have grieved for:—her father, who had superintended her education, and taken a fatherly interest in her first attempts at authorship, did not live to see the faint dawn of

the success which, though it came late, has proved ample.

Before quitting the subject of the novelist's youth at Steventon, I should like to say a word on the influences already referred to, which I believe affected her as a woman and an author. During her whole life she remained to a great extent engrossed by the interests of her family and their limited circle of old and intimate friends. This was as it should be—so far, but there may be too much of a good thing. The tendency of strictly restricted family parties and sets—when their members are above small bickerings and squabbings—when they are really superior people in every sense, is to form “mutual admiration” societies, and neither does this more respectable and amiable weakness act beneficially upon its victims. In the incessant intercourse between the Great House and Upper Cross Cottage in “*Persuasion*,” we have an example, under Jane Austen's own hand, of the evils of such constant communication among people of inferior understanding and intelligence. If we look nearer home, we may have a glimpse of disadvantages of a different sort, attendant on what Scotch people call “clannishness” in a higher region. Good as Jane Austen was, there is a certain spirit of exclusiveness, intolerance, condescension, and what may be classed as refined family selfishness, in the attitude which she, the happy member of a large and united family, distinguished by many estimable qualities, assumed to the world without. She was independent of it to a large extent for social intercourse; and so she told it candidly, and just a little haughtily—forgetting, for the most part, the wants of less favoured individuals—that she needed nothing from it.

Fondly loved and remembered as Jane Austen has been, with much reason, among her own people, in their considerable ramifications, I cannot imagine her as greatly liked, or even regarded with anything save some amount of prejudice, out of the immediate circle of her friends, and in general society. I hope I may not be

misunderstood. I do not mean that the novelist was other than an excellent woman, pre-eminently a gentlewoman. What I mean is, that she allowed her interests and sympathies to become narrow, even for her day, and that her tender charity not only began, but ended, in a large measure, at home. No doubt I am alluding to the characteristics of a generation and class, which showed themselves, in a marked manner, in the repugnance with which other intellectual gentlewomen shrank from acknowledging the profession of authorship, with its obligations, no less than its privileges, as if it involved a degradation—something distinctly injurious to them, both as women and gentlewomen. Fanny Burney, on the other hand, was brought up among artists of every description, which, perhaps, accounts for the transparent literary vanity which forms so broad a contrast to the shyness—often equally self-conscious—of her sister-authors. But the whole bent of Jane Austen's disposition and rearing seem to point in the contrary direction.

Jane Austen was the clear-sighted girl with the sharp pen, if not the sharp tongue, who found in the Steventon visiting-list materials for the *dramatis personæ* of "Pride and Prejudice." It would have been little short of a miracle if she could have conducted herself with such meekness, in her remote rural world, or during the visits she paid to the great English watering-place—while she was all the time laughing in her sleeve—so as not to provoke any suspicion of her satire, or any resentment at what might easily be held her presumption.

We may grant fully that Jane Austen was far too good an artist to make absolute copies from real persons to figure in the pages of her books, and too good a woman not to regard such a practice as a breach of social honour and propriety. But we all know how human beings—especially the duller among us, distrust and dislike being turned into ridicule. "A chiel amang us takin' notes" is not half so offensive as an

audacious boy or girl convicted of taking us off, whether behind our backs or to our faces. I do not mean to infer that Miss Austen at any age was guilty of the mean and disloyal practice called "drawing out people" until they expose their weakness, and then making game of the weaknesses, whether in the victim's company or out of it. I have it on excellent authority that, however thoroughly she was able to sympathise with the witty repartees of two of her favourite heroines, in general company she herself was shy and silent; even in more familiar circles she was innocent of speaking sharp words, and was rather distinguished for her tolerant indulgence to her fellow-creatures, than for her hard judgments on them. The tolerance belonged, by right, to her breadth of comprehension, and to the humour which still more than wit characterised her genius. The suggestion I make is that, seeing her neighbours' foibles, as she certainly did see them, she could not, however generously she might use her superior knowledge, conceal it altogether from her neighbours, and this was less likely to be the case when she was a young girl with some share, presumably, of the thoughtlessness and rashness of other girls, than when she was a mature woman, with the wisdom and gentleness of experience. I have pointed out the softened as well as the more serious tone of her later novels, the difference, for instance, between "Northanger Abbey" and "Persuasion." But who is to guess that the boy or the girl is to turn out a great novelist and humourist, whose genius is a fire in the bones, and an excuse for a hundred liberties?

As an author, in the few letters that have been preserved in which we have Jane Austen's private feelings on the subject of her novels frankly written to her family and friends, she gives one the impression of having always found herself the queen of her company: never in an arrogant, vulgar way; on the contrary, with a sweet playfulness and gracious kindness to those who were closely allied to her by kindred,

blood, and the ties of friendship; but all the same she reigned queen. She might come down from her throne and defer to her elder sister Cassandra, or to any other relative, but her sceptre was still in her hand. I do not draw inferences merely from Jane Austen's hearty, undissembled appreciation of her own work, and her distinct perception, freely announced, of its superior claims; doubtless that was inevitable to such a woman as she was, in the circumstances in which she found herself. It is in the whole assured tone of the half-jesting criticism; the half-pretended impatience that any new great novelist should enter the lists; the total absence—as in the case of Mrs. Radcliffe—of any natural desire to know and be known by her fellow-writers, to measure herself in familiar intercourse with them, above all, to give and receive sympathy.

Of course these peculiarities in the individual woman were not enough to hinder her from admiring at a distance, and occasionally generously proclaiming the admiration for, some of her contemporaries. I am bound also, in fairness, to add to my own impressions that it remained the firm persuasion of Jane Austen's biographer that she was as far as possible from being censorious and satirical. With regard to the censoriousness, I agree perfectly with this witness; but as to the satire, I must bring forward the opposite and impartial testimony of her own writings. Jane Austen was on the whole more humorous than satirical, yet in the earlier novels the satire is prominent. I can give far more unqualified credence to the statement that, while her unusually quick sense of the ridiculous led her to play with all the common-places of every-day life—whether as regarded persons or things—she never played with its serious duties or responsibilities.

With all her neighbours in the village—her humbler neighbours, I suppose—Mr. Austen Leigh says she was on friendly though not on intimate terms. "She took a kindly interest in all their proceedings, and liked to hear about them. They often served for her amuse-

ment, but it was her own nonsense that gave zest to the gossip." The last is a nice distinction, hardly likely to be understood by the neighbours over whose affairs she laughed.

That Jane Austen, with her singular Shakespeare-like sympathy in little, her power of putting herself in another's place, could not help feeling both interested and entertained by the proceedings of the fellow-creatures around her, I can easily believe. What I doubt is that she who turned those simple souls, and the incidents of their lives, inside out, for her mingled instruction and diversion, could altogether conceal the process, or render it palatable to the subjects of the operation.

It was the conviction of the Austen family that Jane's occupation as a novel writer continued long unsuspected by her ordinary acquaintances and neighbours. That may have been, but we cannot imagine that her close study of the characters around her, with her shrewd, humorous conclusions—so extraordinary at the age at which she began to make them—could have been either quite unperceived or wholly approved of by her associates.

There are one or two of Jane Austen's letters from Steventon published in her memoir. They are bright, chatty letters, not far removed from those which any merry-hearted, clever girl might have written. They deal entirely with domestic and local details. The arrival of a set of tables, with which everybody, for a wonder, was pleased; a great November storm, that made havoc among the Parsonage trees; an accident to a neighbour's son; an anticipated ball; the fact that Jane was then reading Hume's "History of England," form the topics. As there is no continuity, either in the letters or the narrative, of which such incidents might supply a part, they fall vaguely and flatly on the reader. The most interesting paragraphs are those which refer to the absent sailor brothers, and the eagerness of the mother and sisters to hear stray news of them, or to forward

letters to them, and procure answering letters by the chances of coming and going ships. There is one passage which tallies with the details of a gift made in "Mansfield Park":—"Charles has received thirty pounds for his share of the privateer, and expects ten pounds more; but of what avail is it to take prizes if he lays out the produce in presents to his sisters? He has been buying gold chains and topaz crosses for us. He must be well scolded. . . . I shall write again by this post to thank and reproach him. We shall be unbearably fine."

IV.

During an absence from home on Jane Austen's part, it was settled, before she knew, that her father, who at the age of seventy had resigned his living of Steventon to his son James, should remove with his wife and daughters to Bath. However much Jane may have felt the fascination of her girlish visits to Bath, she did not approve of it as a place of residence in her more mature womanhood. We are reminded of a sentence in "Persuasion" where the author remarks drily Anne Elliot did not like Bath; fancied it disagreed with her; would have preferred any other place; therefore, to Bath, as a matter of course, the family went. So much for the unpropitiousness of events.

The Austens went to Bath in 1801, when Jane was twenty-six years of age. The family resided first at No. 4, Sydney Terrace, and later at Green Park Buildings. An attraction to Bath, suggested by Mr. Austen Leigh, is that Mrs. Austen's only brother, Mr. Leigh Perrot,* with his wife, was in the habit of spending his

* The members of the Austen and Leigh families seem to have been much given to changing their names—sometimes acquiring estates in the process. Thus we have Mr. Leigh Perrot, Mr. Knight (who was originally Edward Austen), and at last Mr. Austen Leigh.

time between Bath and his place of Scarletts. Like his uncle, the Master of Balliol, Mr. Leigh Perrot was a witty man, and some of his epigrams and riddles, in which he must have far outshone Mr. Woodhouse, found their way, among other morsels, into print. The Austens, with their strong family proclivities, were much with the Leigh Perrots.

Jane was still young, pretty, and cheerful enough to enter with a fair proportion of enjoyment into the gaieties of the place. She had given up writing, in a great measure, since she was three or four and twenty, whether chilled by her lack of success or distracted by other engagements and amusements. However, it is thought that it was during her stay in Bath she wrote several chapters of an unfinished novel called "The Watsons," which, unlike the youthful performance, "Lady Susan," published along with these chapters in the same volume with the memoir, bear a strong flavour of Jane Austen in her sagacity and banter.

She may have been inspirited to the effort by the sale, though for so small a sum, of the MS. of "Northanger Abbey," which happened two years after she came to Bath, when she was twenty-eight years of age. We know the sale proved fruitless, so far as speedy publication was concerned, but the mortifying conclusion could not have been foreseen, and the sale of one of her novels for ten pounds was Jane Austen's first faint gleam of good fortune in authorship, the only one which visited her during her father's lifetime.

The Austens remained at Bath about four years. In their last autumn there, the autumn of 1804, Jane, with her father and mother, spent some weeks at the lovely sea-bathing place of Lyme, which she admired so much, and has immortalised in "Persuasion." We cannot avoid being struck by the small number of the opportunities which Jane Austen had of seeing the world, and by the great use she made of them. Her journeyings were not so very much more extensive than those of the Vicar of Wakefield and his wife in the days

of their prosperity, but they were sufficient for her to avail herself of them for the information and delight of her fellow-creatures. It is not the amount of what we see, but the eyes with which we see it, that signifies.

In the following spring, that of 1805, the Rev. George Austen died at Bath. His widow and daughters then removed to Southampton—drawn to its society very likely by the sailor Austens—and there they stayed for four more years. Mrs. Austen occupied a large old-fashioned house in a corner of Castle Square. The house had a pleasant garden, bounded on one side by the old city wall. A flight of steps led to the top of the wall, which formed a walk with an extensive view of sea and land.

V.

In 1809 the Austens made their last removal. It was back to the country—of which Jane always makes her heroines fond—back to the old neighbourhood of Steventon, her birth-place. Edward Knight offered his mother a choice of two houses—the one on his estate in Kent, the other on his estate in Hampshire. She selected the house in Hampshire, Chawton Cottage, near the squire's occasional home, Chawton House.

Chawton Cottage, in the village of the same name, was not originally a farm house, like Upper Cross Cottage, in "Persuasion;" it had been intended for an inn. Indeed, it stood so close to the high road on which the front door opened, that a very narrow enclosure "paled" in on each side had been necessary to protect the building from the danger of collision with runaway vehicles. In addition to the Gosport Road in front, the Winchester Road skirted the house on one side, so that it could not be regarded as a secluded habitation, but in those days cheerfulness was more prized than seclusion.

There was a large pond close to Chawton Cottage, at the junction of the two public roads. Happily the theory which connects insalubrity with such ponds had not yet been aired, so that to the Austens, no doubt, Chawton pond was a very desirable sheet of water, tending still more to enhance the attractions of the scene. They would not much mind the duckweed and other slimy vegetation. Horses and donkeys, ducks and geese, would disport themselves there in summer. In winter village sliders would bestow animation on the ice.

The squire added to the house, and contrived some judicious planting and screening. A good-sized entrance and two sitting-rooms were managed. In the drawing-room a window which looked to the Gosport Road was blocked up and turned into a bookcase, and another window was opened out and made to command only turf and trees, for a high wooden fence and a hornbeam hedge shut out the Winchester Road. Here was a little bit of genteel privacy. A shrubbery was carried round the enclosure, which Mr. Austen Leigh tells us gave a sufficient space for "ladies' exercise," though we cannot help thinking the exercise-ground must have been rather limited for the middle-aged women.

However, there was a pleasant irregular mixture of hedgerow, gravel-walk, and orchard, with grass for mowing, made by two or three little enclosures having been thrown together. As it happened, walking had to be relinquished before many years by the younger sister, and Jane Austen, as well as her mother, had to resort to a donkey-carriage for exercise.

Altogether Chawton Cottage was "quite as good as the generality of parsonages, and nearly in the same style." It was capable of receiving other members of the family as frequent visitors. In this respect it must have contrasted favourably in Jane's mind with the cottage in which she had established Ellinor and Marianne Dashwood with their mother, in "Sense and Sensibility." Chawton Cottage was sufficiently well

furnished.* Altogether it formed a comfortable and “lady-like” establishment for a family of ladies whose means were not large. To Jane Austen it was her own house, among her own people, points which meant a great deal to her. Besides, she was a woman possessed at once of too much self-respect and self-resource, and of too serene a spirit and lively a temper to care much either for outward show or interior luxury.

Jane Austen was thirty-four years of age when she settled down at Chawton, her sister Cassandra was thirty-seven, their mother seventy. They were a household of old and middle-aged women, increased either then or a little later by a family connection—a Miss Lloyd—who lived with the Austens. Their prospects were as clearly defined as earthly prospects could well be, and they accepted the definition. Jane Austen was never seen without a cap, either in the morning or the evening, after she went to Chawton. The Austen sisters assumed early the caps which were then the mark of matronhood or confirmed spinsterhood. Possibly Cassandra Austen first adopted the badge as a quiet sign that she wished to have nothing more to do with love and marriage, and Jane bore her faithful company in this as in everything else. Mr. Austen Leigh mentions also—and every trifle is welcome which bears on the novelist’s character and habits—it was held that his aunts, though remarkably neat in their dress, as in all their ways, were not sufficiently attentive to the fashionable or the becoming. In short, Jane and Cassandra Austen, though they had been the young beauties of Steventon in their time, entertained no fear of being styled dowdies or frights in their middle age, whether by their young relatives or the “dressy” among their contemporaries.

The Austens dwelt in the centre of family interests, several members of the old Steventon household living

* There was a wise and really dignified moderation about people’s ideas then. Is it to our honour to have departed so far from the contented minds and simple habits of our predecessors?

near, while a younger generation was growing up, with fresh claims on the affectionate sympathies of their grandmother and aunts. In her family and among her old friends Jane Austen was unsurpassed as a tender sick-nurse, an untiring confidante, and a wise counsellor.

In these congenial circumstances it seemed as if a fresh spring of courage and hopefulness, and with them renewed inspiration in her art, came to the author. She began the very year of her arrival at Chawton to revise and prepare her old MSS. for publication. She had found a publisher in a Mr. Egerton, and she brought out in succession two novels—the first, “Sense and Sensibility,” when she was thirty-six years of age, in 1811, fourteen or fifteen years after it was re-written at Steventon. She got for it, though after how short or long an interval, or by what arrangement, we are not told, a hundred and fifty pounds. In her gay way she exclaimed at so large a reward for what had cost her nothing—nothing save genius, ungrudging trouble, and long patience. “Pride and Prejudice” was published two years later, in 1813.

In the meantime Jane Austen began fresh work, for “Mansfield Park” was commenced the year before. She had no separate study; she worked in the family sitting-room, undisturbed by the conversation, or the various occupations going on around her, and subjected to all kinds of interruptions. She wrote at a little mahogany writing-desk, on small pieces of paper, which could be easily put aside, or covered with blotting-paper at the sight of visitors. But it would be a great mistake to suppose that she did not take the greatest pains with her work. She wrote and re-wrote, filed and polished; her own comparison for the process was painting on a few inches of ivory by repeated touches.

“Pride and Prejudice” attracted attention before long.*

* At the same time many popular lady novelists, including Miss Edgeworth, Lady Morgan, the Miss Porters, and Mrs. Brunton, were already in the field, and it was not immediately recognised, except perhaps, by a few great men, that a queen of novelists had appeared among them.

When the secret of the authorship became known, in spite of the author's name being omitted on the title-page, Jane Austen's experience was that of a prophet who has no honour in his own country. Mr. Austen Leigh says that any praise which reached the author and her family from their neighbours and acquaintances was of the mildest description, and that those excellent people would have considered Miss Jane's relatives mad if it had been suspected that they put her, in their own minds, on a level with Madame d'Arblay or even with far inferior writers. A letter is given in which the novelist describes to her sister Cassandra in the liveliest terms her feelings on seeing "Pride and Prejudice" in print. She had got her own darling child from London. The advertisement of it had appeared in their paper that day for the first time. Eighteen shillings! She should ask a guinea for her two next, and twenty-eight shillings for her stupidest of all.

A friend who was not in the secret had dined at Chawton Cottage on the very day of the book's coming, and in the evening the family had fairly set to it and read half the first volume to her without her having any suspicion. "She was amused, poor soul!" observes the author, and then adds, with admirable *naïveté*, "*That she could not help, you know, with two such characters to lead the way, but she really does seem to admire Elizabeth. I must confess that I think her as delightful a creature as ever appeared in print, and how I shall be able to tolerate those who do not like her at least, I do not know.*"

In another letter Jane Austen refers to the second reading, which had not come off quite so well, and had even caused her some fits of disgust. She attributed the comparative failure to the rapid way in which her mother, who seemed to have been the reader, got on, and to her not being able to speak as the characters ought, though she understood them perfectly. When we recollect that the old lady was already seventy-four years of age, we

are rather astonished that she found voice and breath for such a labour of love as reading aloud her daughter's novel, than that she was not able to give the dialogue with sufficient point. Upon the whole, the daughter winds up, she was quite vain enough and well satisfied enough, and the only fault which she found with her story was that it was rather too light, and bright, and sparkling; it wanted to be stretched here and there with a long chapter of sense, if it could be had, if not of solemn specious nonsense. Unquestionably the novelist was not plagued with diffidence, any more than with mock-modesty.

In the same letter she refers to an out-of-the-way book for a woman to read, with which she was then engaged; it was an "Essay on the Military Police, and Institutions of the British Empire, by Captain Pasley, of the Engineers." She declared it was delightfully written, and highly entertaining, and that the author was the first soldier she had ever sighed for. The last assertion reminds one of Jane Austen's strong preference for the sister service, which may be best explained by the circumstance that she had two brothers in the navy, and none in the army. Her heroes are squires, clergymen, and sailors, just as the male Austens were. She uses their Christian names, James, Henry, Frank, Edward, as well as her own. Her sister's name was too singular and conspicuous to be thus employed.

Another letter a year later, in 1814, supplies an account of a journey which Jane Austen made "post" to London, in company with her brother Henry, who read the MS. of "Mansfield Park" by the way. It sounds as if the brother and sister were themselves the bearers of the new work to the publisher, who brought it out the same year.

"Emma," the heroine of which proved almost as great a favourite as Elizabeth Bennet with their author, was written and published two years later, in 1816. It was in connection with this, the last book of hers which Jane Austen lived to see come out, that she received

what her nephew calls the only mark of distinction ever bestowed upon her. She was in London during the previous autumn of 1815, the year of Waterloo, nursing her brother Henry through a dangerous illness, in his house in Hans Place. Henry Austen was attended by one of the Prince Regent's physicians. To this gentleman it became known that his patient's nurse was the author of "*Pride and Prejudice*." The court physician told the lady that the Prince was a great admirer of her novels; that he read them often, and kept a set in every one of his residences; that he himself had thought it right to inform his royal highness that Miss Austen was staying in London, and that the Prince had desired Mr. Clarke, the librarian at Carlton House, to wait upon her.

The next day Mr. Clarke made his appearance, and invited Jane Austen to Carlton House, saying that he had the Prince's instructions to show her the library,* and other apartments, and to pay her every possible attention. The invitation was of course accepted, and in the course of the visit to Carlton House Mr. Clarke declared himself commissioned to say that if Miss Austen had any other novel forthcoming, she was at liberty to dedicate it to the Prince. Accordingly, such a dedication was immediately prefixed to "*Emma*," which was at that time in John Murray's hands.

The first part of the civility, the invitation to Carlton House, was a gracious enough mark of attention from the first gentleman in Europe to the first lady novelist in his kingdom; but at this distance of time, in the full light enjoyed by posterity, it seems passing strange that two such women as Jane Austen and Jane Porter—equal in moral worth, though standing on very different intellectual heights—should have eagerly availed themselves of the permission to dedicate books to George IV., though he had been ten times the Prince Regent, and

* It appears, however, to have been to her new publisher, Mr. Murray, that Jane Austen was indebted for an early sight of the books of the season, including "*Paul's Letters to his Kinsfolk*."

the future king. And what is if possible stranger, is that the Prince Regent should have been, even professedly, an admiring, assiduous reader of the novels—altogether apart in literary merit, but alike in good tone and taste—of these two upright and blameless women. The fact is enough to tempt people to a disheartening doubt of the moral influence of books.

As a qualification to the pleasure derived from the princely compliment, Jane Austen had to suffer the annoyance of receiving and declining to comply with two rather preposterous suggestions offered to her by Mr. Clarke. The one was for her to pourtray the habits of life, character, and enthusiasm of a clergyman who should pass his time between London and the country, and who should bear some resemblance to Beattie's Minstrel.

In a letter in which she thanks her correspondent for his praise of her novels, and expresses her anxiety that her fourth work might not disgrace what was good in the others, remarking she was haunted by the idea that the readers who have preferred "Pride and Prejudice" will think "Emma" inferior in wit; and those who have preferred "Mansfield Park" will consider the present novel deficient in sense, she demurely puts aside Mr. Clarke's hint for her next story, on the plea that, though she might be equal to the comic part of it, the learned side of the clergyman would demand a classic education and an amount of acquaintance with ancient and modern literature that was far beyond her. Perhaps in self-defence from similar assaults, she concludes by boasting herself, "with all possible vanity, the most unlearned and uninformed female who ever dared to be an authoress."

But the irrepressible Mr. Clarke was not to be deterred from his purpose of advising the novelist as to the direction of her talents. His second piece of advice was more startling and incongruous than his first. Prince Leopold was then on the eve of his marriage with Princess Charlotte. Mr. Clarke had had the good

fortune to be appointed Chaplain and private English Secretary to the Prince. The clergyman might have had a generous desire that another clergyman's daughter should have the chance of sharing his good luck and assurance of preferment. Or he might have had a wish to procure a compliment for his last princely patron, and might have believed it was specially due from Jane Austen as a small return for the notice which the Prince Regent had condescended to take of her and her work. Mr. Clarke proposed that Miss Austen should write an historical novel illustrative of the august house of Cobourg,* which would just then be very interesting, and might very properly be dedicated to Prince Leopold. The date of the proposal brings vividly before us the deliberation with which public events were discussed in those days. For a public event to be dealt with now-a-days so as to take the tide of public interest at its height, an author would require to be as much in advance of the historical circumstance as publishers show themselves in their anticipation of Christmas. It would be necessary, in order that a novel founded on a royal marriage should command readers, that the author should be taken into what Mr. Clarke would have called the august confidence of the principals at the very first step of the negotiations, so that he might be able to bring out his work within twelve hours of the ceremony.

Jane Austen was not so profoundly honoured by the recommendation as Jane Porter felt when she set herself to comply with a royal wish that she should commemorate the first beginnings of the House of Brunswick.

After all, so-called historical novels were in Miss Porter's way and not in Miss Austen's. Mr. Austen Leigh speaks of the grave civility with which Jane Austen refused to make such an attempt. It seems to me that while she respectfully acknowledges the courtesies of Carlton House, and readily responds with answering friendliness to the friendly tone of Mr.

* Mr. Clarke's tall language recalls the phrases of Mr. Collins in "Pride and Prejudice."

Clarke's communication, there is considerable impatience and scorn in her merry but most decided dismissal of his ridiculous project. Even to her congratulations on his recent appointment she adds a sentence which has a suspicion of irony in it. "In my opinion," she writes, "the service of a court can hardly be too well paid, for immense must be the sacrifice of time and feeling required by it." She goes on to say, "You are very kind in your hints as to the sort of composition which might recommend me at present, and I am fully sensible that an historical romance, founded on the House of Saxe-Cobourg, might be much more to the purpose of profit or popularity than such pictures of domestic life in country villages as I deal in. But I could no more write a romance than an epic poem. I could not sit seriously down to write a serious romance under any other motive than to save my life; and if it were indispensable for me to keep it up, and never relax into laughing at myself or other people, I am sure I should be hung before I had finished the first chapter. No; I must keep to my own style, and go on in my own way; and though I may never succeed again in that, I am convinced that I should totally fail in any other."

There is an anecdote of Jane Austen which coincides with her character, and has been widely circulated, though it is not mentioned by Mr. Austen Leigh. If it had a foundation in fact, it must have occurred either during this visit to London or in the course of that paid not long before. It is said that Miss Austen received an invitation to a rout given by an aristocratic couple with whom she was not previously acquainted. The reason assigned for the invitation was, that the author of "Pride and Prejudice" might be introduced to the author of "Corinne." Tradition has it that the English novelist refused the invitation, saying, that to no house where she was not asked as Jane Austen would she go as the author of "Pride and Prejudice."

The anecdote is often quoted with marks of admira-

tion for the author's independence. But even the most honest and honourable independence has its becoming limits. That of Jane Austen, ultra self-sufficing, fastidious, tinged with haughtiness, is just a trifle repellant out of that small circle in which she was always at home.

Whether or not Madame de Staël was consulted about the proposed meeting, she was not an admirer of her sister author. The somewhat grandiloquent Frenchwoman characterised the productions of that English genius—which were the essence of common-sense—as “*vulgaires*,” precisely what they were not.

Apparently, Jane Austen was not one whit more accessible to English women of letters. There were many of deserved repute in or near London at the dates of these later visits. Not to speak of Mrs. Inchbald,* whom her correspondent, warm-hearted Maria Edgeworth, rejoiced to come to England and meet personally, there were the two Porters, Joanna Baillie—at the representation of whose fine play, *The Family Legend*, Sir Walter Scott and Lord Byron had lately “assisted”—and the veteran writer, Madame d'Arblay, whose creations were the object of Jane Austen's early and late admiration. But we do not hear of a single overture towards acquaintance between Miss Austen and these ladies, though her work must have left as lively an impression on some of their minds as theirs had done on hers. Men of letters were no better known to her.

Jane Austen was destined to add only one more tale—and that a short, if charming story—to the list of her novels. In the course of 1816, she wrote “*Persuasion*,” which is not merely very good, in her own style, but possesses distinguishing excellences wanting in the others.†

* We have a single hint of Jane Austen's delight in “a good play.” She alludes with eager expectation, in one of her letters, to her brother's strenuous efforts to get tickets to hear Kean.

† “*Persuasion*” was published, together with “*Northanger Abbey*,” by Mr. Murray, in 1818, the year after Jane Austen's death. The proceeds of her books which had fallen to her share in her lifetime

Between February, 1811, and August, 1816, rather more than five years, Jane Austen wrote her three later novels, "Mansfield Park," "Emma," and "Persuasion"—pendants, as it were, to her three earlier works, "Pride and Prejudice," "Sense and Sensibility," and "Northanger Abbey," belonging to 1796, '97, and '98—twenty years before. The author's second period of composition was as productive as her first, if we take into consideration that "Sense and Sensibility" was simply an adaptation from a more juvenile story still.

Making allowance for the novelist's strong individuality, there is an undoubted change in the tone. There are greater tolerance and tenderness especially noticeable in "Persuasion"—more thoughtfulness and earnestness in "Mansfield Park"—a perfection of composition which belongs peculiarly to "Emma." All the three novels are distinguished by greater polish of the simple, vigorous diction, and a still more determined adherence to probability. The later novels may lack some amount of what Jane Austen herself defined as the sparkle of "Pride and Prejudice"—a sparkle which was often hard as well as bright; but the notion of any falling-off in power in the author would be absurd. There was an ample equivalent for anything she might have lost in fresh spontaneousness by what she had gained in reflection and feeling, and in delicacy of execution.

VI.

The shadow of what proved a mortal illness was already hanging over Jane Austen while she was work-

were seven hundred pounds, but how the sum was apportioned to each novel we are not told. If contemporary favour is rarely a test of a book's merit, still less is the sum of money which it fetches to begin with. Among the lady novelists of her day—none of whom, not even Maria Edgeworth or Susan Ferrier, deserves to be mentioned in the same breath with Jane Austen—there were several whose pecuniary gains must have been double and treble hers.

ing at "Persuasion," and this circumstance may help to account for a certain soft pensiveness in the book, in opposition to the author's earlier unbroken, often hard, brilliance. But, as a proof that her high standard of literary excellence, and the pains which she did not grudge in order to attain it, had not abated, Mr. Austen Leigh tells us that, having ended her novel, "Persuasion," she was dissatisfied with the close, and her dissatisfaction preyed on her mind to such a degree as to affect her usually cheerful spirits. She retired to bed one night quite depressed, but rose next morning with renewed energy and hope to make a fresh effort. She pulled down what she had done so far as to cancel the chapter containing the re-engagement of the hero and heroine, which she had pronounced flat and tame. She wrote two entirely new chapters—among the most delightful in the book—in its place. Instead of reconciling the couple at the Crofts' lodgings, she brought the Musgroves and Captain Harville to Bath, and we know the result. Any one who has the least idea of the relief implied to a conscientious artist in the conclusion of a long thought out, long laboured at piece of work—the double relief when bodily health and spirits have failed under the task—will comprehend something of the devotion to her art and concern for her reputation which compelled the novelist thus to resume and re-construct her last scenes.

Struggling against illness as Jane Austen was from the earlier stages of the internal disease which ultimately proved fatal, in the January of 1817—the year in which she died—she began another tale, and wrote on—in spite of such bodily weakness that the last portions were first traced in pencil, though the quantity continued as great as twelve chapters in seven weeks—till the 17th of March, two months before she left Chawton not to return, and four months before her death. Mr. Austen Leigh mentions some family troubles in the spring of 1816, which his aunt took to heart, and which might have aggravated her complaint. I do not know whether these had anything to do with the persistent industry under adverse

circumstances; whether she might be anxious to contribute her share still, as she had been doing within the last few years, to the family income; or whether she might be prompted feverishly to seek the distraction from other cares afforded by mental work.

Certainly, those of Jane Austen's letters which belong to this date are as lively as ever, and wittier than in her younger days. She wrote to a nephew in reference to the weather that it was really too bad, and had been too bad for a long time, much worse than any body could bear, and she began to think it would never be fine again. This was a *finesse* of hers, for she had often observed that if anybody wrote about the weather it was generally completely changed before the letter was read. She chaffed the Winchester boy on having first dated the letter from his father's house at Steventon, and then given the superfluous information that he had returned home. She was glad that he had recollected to mention his being come home. Her heart had begun to sink within her when she had got so far through his letter without its being mentioned. She had been dreadfully afraid that he might have been detained at Winchester by some illness—confined to his bed, perhaps, and quite unable to hold a pen, and only dating from Steventon in order, with a mistaken sort of tenderness, to deceive her. But now she had no doubt of his being at home, she was sure he would not have said it so seriously unless it were so.

She changed the subject to describe countless post-chaises full of Winchester boys passing the cottage on their return home for their holidays—chaises full of future heroes, legislators, fools, and villains. Before he came to see his grandmother and aunts his mother must get well, he must go to Oxford, and *not* be elected. After that, a little change of scene might be good for him, and his physicians, she hoped, would order him to the sea, or to a house by the side of a very considerable pond.

In another letter to the same correspondent, Jane

Austen said that one reason of her writing was for the pleasure of directing to the young fellow as Esquire. She wished him joy on having left Winchester for good. Now he might own how miserable he had been there; now it would gradually all come out, his crimes and his miseries: how often he had gone up by the mail to London and thrown away fifty guineas at a tavern, and how often he had been on the point of hanging himself, restrained only, as some ill-natured person writing on poor Winton had it, by the want of a tree within some miles of the city.

This nephew, like one of the author's nieces, appears to have been perpetrating a boyish attempt at a novel under the fascination of the favourite Aunt Jane's vocation. There was some delightful banter from her on their common craft. After a brief allusion to his Uncle Henry's very superior sermons, she proceeded to suggest that the budding novelist and herself ought to get hold of one or two and put them into their novels; it would be a fine help to a volume; they could make their heroines read them aloud on a Sunday evening, just as well as Isabella Wardlaw in the "*Antiquary*"* was made to read the history of the Hartz demon in the ruins of St. Ruth, though Jane believed on recollection Lovel was the reader. She was quite concerned for the loss the lad's mother had mentioned in her letter. Two chapters and a half to be missing was monstrous. It was well that she had not been at Steventon lately, and therefore could not be suspected of purloining them; two strong twigs and a half towards a nest of her own would have been something. She did not think, however, that any theft of that sort would be really very useful to her. What could she have done with his strong, manly, vigorous sketches, full of variety and glow? How could she possibly have joined them on to the little bit (two inches wide) of ivory on which she worked with so fine a brush as produced little effect after much labour?

* *The novel of the year.*

Jane Austen's disease increased gradually, while she was spared much suffering. Her friends were not aware how soon or how late she apprehended the serious nature of her complaint. Her unselfishness and her buoyant temper alike inclined her to make light of any illness. An instance is given of her constant consideration for those around her. In the usual sitting-room at Chawton Cottage there was only one sofa, frequently occupied by Mrs. Austen, then in her seventy-eighth year. Jane, who was forced to lie down often, would never use the sofa, even in her mother's absence. She contrived a sort of couch for herself with two or three chairs, and alleged that the arrangement was much more comfortable to her than a real sofa; but the importunity of a little niece drew from the invalid the private explanation that she believed if she herself had shown any inclination to use the sofa, her mother might have scrupled being on it so much as was good for her.

In a long letter to a friend, in the beginning of 1817, Jane wrote happily about herself, as having certainly gained strength during the winter, and being then not far from well. She thought she understood her case better than she had done, and ascribed her symptoms to biliousness, which could be kept off by care. After various bits of family news she finished the letter, then added in a postscript that the real object of the epistle was to ask her friend for a recipe, but she had thought it genteel not to let it appear early.

By April Jane Austen was seriously ill, and a young niece who had walked over with an elder sister to inquire for her aunt, received the impression of her as quite like an invalid. She was in her dressing-gown, sitting in an arm-chair, though she could get up and kindly greet the visitors. She was very pale, her voice was weak and low, and there was about her a general appearance of debility and suffering. She was not equal to the exertion of talking, and the visit of the nieces to the sick room was a short one, their other aunt, Cassandra, soon taking them away.

In the following month, May, Jane Austen was induced to go to Winchester, to be near a skilful doctor, who spoke encouragingly to his patient, but who from the first entertained little expectation of a permanent cure. She was accompanied by her life-long friend and sister Cassandra. They could leave their aged mother behind them with the friend and family connection who made one of the household at Chawton Cottage. Besides, Mrs. Austen was near several of her children and grandchildren. In Winchester, where the sisters had lodgings in the corner house in College Street, at the entrance to Commoners, the Austens had old and valued friends among the residents in the Close. Still Jane wrote hopefully about herself to the nephew to whom she appears to have been so much attached. There was no better way of thanking him for his affectionate concern for her during her illness than by telling him herself, as soon as possible, that she continued to get better. She seems to have been aware of the change in her penmanship, which struck him also, and hastened to observe gaily that she would not boast of her handwriting: neither that nor her face had yet recovered their proper beauty, but in other respects she gained strength very fast. She was then out of bed from nine in the morning until ten at night—upon the sofa, it was true, but she ate her meals with Aunt Cassandra in a rational way, and could employ herself and walk from one room to another. Mr. Lyford (the surgeon) said he would cure her, and if he failed, she would draw up a memorial to the Dean and Chapter, and had no doubt of redress from that pious, learned, and disinterested body. The sisters' lodgings were very comfortable. They had a neat little drawing-room with a bow window, overlooking Dr. Gabell's garden. Thanks to the kindness of her correspondent's father and mother in sending her their carriage, her journey to Winchester on Saturday had been performed with very little fatigue, and had it been a fine day, she thought

she would have felt none; but it had distressed her much to see Uncle Henry and William Knight, who had kindly attended them on horseback, riding in the rain almost the whole way.

The cheerful letter ends solemnly: "God bless you, my dear E——. If ever you are ill, may you be as tenderly nursed as I have been. May the same blessed alleviations of anxious sympathising friends be yours; and may you possess, as I dare say you will, the greatest blessing of all, in the consciousness of not being unworthy of their love. *I could not feel this.* Your very affectionate aunt, J. A."

For amidst the sweet and jubilant sights and sounds of an English May and June in the old grey cathedral town, the great English novelist was fast passing away. Jane Austen had always been a sweet-tempered, contented woman, and all that was best and noblest in her nature and her faith came out in the patience, humility, and thankfulness with which she met her last enemy. "I will only say farther," are her loving words, in one more letter, that "my dearest sister, my tender, watchful, indefatigable nurse, has not been made ill by her exertions. As to what I owe her, and the anxious affection of all my beloved family on this occasion, I can only cry over it, and pray God to bless them more and more."

The sister who had lived together with Jane in their home—who had been with her waking and sleeping for forty-two years—who had served the little girl as a model—who had held the office of the young author's sole confidante beforehand, as to her characters and plots—who had rejoiced and suffered with her, stood by and soothed Jane Austen's death-bed; so did a sister-in-law, to whom the dying woman said, almost with her last breath, "You have always been a kind sister to me, Mary."

Two of her brothers, whom she had so cherished in her faithful affection, both clergymen living near, were frequently with her, administering the consolations

and services of their church, as well as testifying their constant regard. She was fully acquainted with her danger, though she continued hopeful. She had much to bind her to life. "We may well believe," Mr. Austen Leigh writes, "that she would gladly have lived longer; but she was enabled, without dismay or complaint, to prepare for death. She was a humble, believing Christian." And she was strengthened to rule her spirit to the last. Her sweetness of temper never failed. She was always considerate of, and grateful to, those who attended on her. At times, when she felt a little better, the ruling spirit of playfulness revived, and she amused her companions even in their sadness. She sank rapidly in the end. On being asked whether there was anything she wanted, her reply was, "Nothing but death." These were her parting words. In quietness and peace, records Jane Austen's nephew, she breathed her last, on the morning of July 18th, 1817, at the age of forty-two years. She was buried on the 24th of July, in Winchester Cathedral, near the centre of the north aisle, opposite the tomb of William of Wykeham. A slab of black marble marks the place.*

The words with which Mr. Austen Leigh concludes the memoir are full of simple pathos. "Her own family only attended the funeral. Her sister returned to her desolated home, there to devote herself to the care of her aged mother, and to live much on the memory of her lost sister, till called many years later to rejoin her. Her brothers went back sorrowing to their several homes. They were very fond and very proud of her. They were attached to her by her talents, her virtues, and her engaging manners; and each loved afterwards to fancy a resemblance in some niece or daughter of his own to the dear sister Jane, whose perfect equal they yet never expected to see."

Surely to be thus prized and mourned by her nearest and dearest was beautiful and good—in one

* In addition, there is now a monument which was erected to Jane Austen's memory by her nephew, the writer of the memoir.

sense best—while it need not have interfered with wider interests and influences ; and, doubtless, to be so cherished was the meet reward of Jane Austen's faithful performance of the home duties from which no literary career, however arduous and distinguished, absolved her, and of her unswerving loyalty to the domestic affections which form the inner citadel of all true natures. For charity or love must always begin at home, and reign paramount there, wherever it may end, though the extremities of the earth may own its sway.

Jane Austen's mother survived her ten years, dying at the great age of eighty-eight. Cassandra Austen lived nearly twenty years after her mother's death, nearly thirty years after the death of Jane, dying at the age of seventy. On the death of Cassandra Austen, Chawton Cottage was suffered to fall far down in the social scale of houses : it was divided into tenements for labourers. The rooms continued to be so used while the walls were still standing, nine or ten years ago.



JANE AUSTEN'S NOVELS.



THE study of Jane Austen's novels is in some respects a liberal education. The proper appreciation of these stories has been suggested as a gauge of intellect. But though the verdict of the best judges, including the earnest, well-nigh reverential approbation of Sir Walter Scott, and the boundless enthusiasm of Lord Macaulay, who has pronounced Jane Austen, in her more limited walk, next to Shakespeare, the test is unfair, so long as men and women's minds, no less than the schools of fiction, are in two major, in addition to many minor divisions. Of course, where authors are concerned, in rare and great instances, as in that of Shakespeare, the divisions are united, and we have a comprehensive, many-sided genius. But these exceptions are few and far between, like stars of the first magnitude. There is a cast of inventive intellect, and a school of writing which deal exclusively with human nature in the mass, choosing to work with common materials, and to make them valuable by the penetrating fidelity, and nice perception and adaptation of the workmanship. There is another order of genius and of wit, which selects an extraordinary, sometimes an abnormal subject, whether man or woman, story or surroundings, and by the sheer power and the passionate insight which are shown in the treatment,

compel our comprehension and sympathy for what would otherwise be strange, perhaps repugnant to us.

These minds and schools are, and always must be, in natural antagonism to each other. The disciples of the one have rarely such breadth of faculty and taste as to be the disciples of the other. Among women, Jane Austen may be taken as the representative of the first class, Charlotte Brontë of the second. The fervent, faithful followers of the one genius are apt, more or less, to condemn and slight the other.

It is more than questionable whether the two women, had they been contemporaries, could have sympathised strongly. Of course, the opportunity was not granted to Jane Austen; but in the case of Charlotte Brontë, who stands here for what is, after all, the narrower school, though its inspiration may be deeper, she was perplexed and annoyed by the recommendation of a critic to whom she paid deference that she should read and re-read Miss Austen. Jane Austen's work was "tame and domestic," if not peddling, to Charlotte Brontë.

After dismissing the unfair insistence on a universal acknowledgment of the surpassing qualities, in her own line, of Jane Austen, it is still true that they are as nearly as possible perfect. Great variety of character, though in one class and amidst the same surroundings—which rendered the achievement of such variety the more remarkable—lively interest excited by the most legitimate means; the artistic cunning with which everyday events are handled; keen irony; delicate, exquisite humour, which never fails; the greatest capacity for selecting and grouping her materials—where shall we find these attractions in an equal degree to that in which they are to be met in Jane Austen's novels? Above all, every story is as wholesome and sweet, without cloyiness, as English wheat-fields repaying the cultivation of generations, and the roses, set in hardy prickles, of English gardens.

We hear much, with reason, of the great English

humourists. Why has a secondary place among them not been assigned to Jane Austen? Making due allowance for sex and rank, and the double restrictions which they laid upon her, none can read her novels with intelligent appreciation and fail to see that she deserves to stand high in the rank of English humourists, unless, indeed, the root-word humour is understood to mean oddity and eccentricity, and the definition humourist is confined to the writer who illustrates oddities. For it is one of Miss Austen's crowning distinctions, that just as she hardly ever exaggerated or caricatured, so she did not care to have to do with men and women riding their hobbies.

I have been amazed to read one criticism of Jane Austen, which denies her all humour, and only grants her a sense of the ridiculous and a power of expressing it, in addition to her life-like pictures of English country life in her own rank. The critic remarks that she only provokes a smile, never a laugh. No doubt standards are different, but I am inclined to suspect that the broad burlesque and screaming farce, which to this critic appears to sum up every display of humour, and which might draw shouts of laughter from him and his school, would not win so much as a smile from the admirers of Miss Austen.

Another accusation which has been brought against Jane Austen is, that she is deficient in strength and warmth. But violence is not strength, neither is demonstrativeness warmth. Unquestionably this novelist never tears her passion to tatters. For that matter she elected not to deal with fierce passions. But in her own field of art, if restrained power and marvellous flexibility be strength, then she is strong. Indeed, the idea of weakness associated with Jane Austen is superlatively absurd. Again, self-respectful, delicate reticence may be called cold, but if so the coldness is shared by some of the best writers of fiction in every generation, and it would be well for modern English literature and its readers if such coldness were more common.

I should like to say a word on the real limitations of Jane Austen's genius in her novels. In the first place, while the talk and writing of our mothers and grandmothers were, with regard to many things, simpler and more plain-spoken than ours, there is another side on which they were strictly reserved. Deep feeling, religious opinions, personal testimony on the highest questions, were, unless in exceptional circles, withheld and kept hidden as too sacred for general discussion; above all, as unfit for the pages of a story. No one who knows much of the women and their books can doubt the vital religious principles of Jane Austen and Jane and Anna Maria Porter. But though Jane Porter always included fervent religious faith among the attributes of her idealised fantastic heroes of romance, Anna Maria, in the only tale in which she showed how well and pleasantly she could deal with contemporary life, apologised anxiously in the preface for the serious tone of the later volumes. Jane Austen, a stronger-minded woman, could entertain a still more decided view of her calling, and could restrain any impulse to overstep it. She is almost absolutely silent on every motive and principle out of what she held to be her province; nay, she frequently brings forward the lower motives of sound common sense and rational prudence, just as a sensitive person would prefer to urge them still, in mixed company, rather than bring in loftier obligations, when to do so might be casting pearls before swine. We have to study the conduct rather than the speeches of her characters, just as we have to look at the lives of some of the best men and women in every generation, to discern to our satisfaction that they are, with all their human frailties, thoroughly reverent and noble-minded.

There is nothing in the last observation to imply that the author shirked any duty of speech which she recognised. On the contrary, in carrying out her purpose of exhibiting the deplorable results of an entirely worldly education in the Crawfords and Bertrams in

“Mansfield Park;” in indicating the little straws of former bad habits which are enough to expose a hypocrite to eyes willing to be enlightened in Mr. Elliot in “*Persuasion*,” she probably put force upon her natural reserve, that she might not fail in her fidelity to her moral. For one of the most gifted English novelists never wrote without a good moral, more or less conspicuous. So universally was the true morality of Jane Austen’s novels acknowledged, that at a time when novels were, with too much cause, largely tabooed in many households, there was a general exception made in favour of the tales in which the characters said little or nothing about religion, but lived it to some extent.

The absence of the most distant allusion to a higher life and its power is most conspicuous in the clergymen who figure largely in Miss Austen’s novels. Her biographer and nephew, Mr. Austen Leigh, himself a clergyman, and the son and grandson of clergymen, sees himself called upon to refer to this, when he says in her memoir that the standard of duty in the Church is much higher than formerly, and that the profession and practice even of Henry Tilney and Edmund Bertram would be different to-day.

It is to this marked restraint which Jane Austen put upon the expression of all sacred depths of feeling, whether they belonged to religion or not, quite as much as to her mental constitution, or to the formal conditions of her generation, that another result is due. While we have so much that may instruct, entertain, and delight us in her stories, we have nothing that will harrow, and not much that will move us to thoughts which lie too deep for tears. There is no end of enchanting humour; there is curiously little pathos.

With regard to that other criticism which may be made of defective taste and sentiment in some of the work which is otherwise so excellent, as in “*Pride and Prejudice*,” in the free discussion not only by a vulgar matchmaker like Mrs. Bennet, and by her silly, giddy

younger daughters, but by modest and charming girls like Jane and Elizabeth Bennet, of the probability of Mr. Bingley's falling in love with one of the girls among whom he has come, and marrying her—thus at the same time securing her happiness and providing her with an unexceptionable establishment—I believe it is an example at once of blunter candour than exists at present, and of the sole light in which a girl's position was then regarded. It goes without saying that Jane and Elizabeth were incapable either of instituting unbecoming and unwomanly attempts to attract the hero of the hour, or of consenting to marry any other hero, whom they could neither respect nor love, simply as the means to secure an establishment in life. As it happened, Cassandra and Jane Austen, in whom some of their contemporaries saw the originals of Jane and Elizabeth Bennet, proved equally incapable of the last piece of unworthy time-serving. But Miss Austen was what all true artists and teachers must be,—in advance of the prevailing morality of her day. She argued and acted on the side of what was upright and unworldly; still she was so far affected by the tone of thought around her as to cause her best women in "Pride and Prejudice" to wait and watch for Bingley's throwing the handkerchief, while they coolly debate Jane Bennet's chances of attracting and fixing his regard. A hundred or eighty years ago there was but one career for a woman not possessed of an independent fortune—that of marriage. Jane Austen never concealed—on the contrary, she publicly proclaimed in "Emma," that she looked upon the necessity of a gentlewoman's working for her livelihood as a very hard and well-nigh degrading obligation, an ordeal which would expose her to much that was at once painful and injurious. We may hope that we have to some extent happily changed all that. Besides the prejudices, no doubt not ill-founded, on all the evidence which was then in the possession of even the wisest and most liberal-minded of our predecessors, we must not forget that Miss Austen has placed her five

Miss Bennets in a specially trying and precarious position. Their father's estate was entailed on male heirs, and on his death passed to a cousin, who was a stranger to the family. The interest of the mother's small fortune of four thousand pounds was inadequate to maintain her daughters, save in a poor way, altogether beneath what they had been accustomed to. The circumstances were not enough to tempt the fine-spirited, true-hearted elder girls into any betrayal of their real dignity and independence in the matter of marriage. But Jane Austen did not mean—it would be ridiculous in taking the generation and its rooted restrictions into consideration, to suppose she could—that the precariousness of the Bennets' prospects did not influence them, and their friends for them, in desiring that they should be speedily and well married.

There is an undeniable occasional hardness and sharpness of satire, most perceptible in the earlier of the novels, and softening as the author's nature mellowed. As an instance of change in a familiar custom, there is hardly ever an abbreviation of a christian name in the family life of Miss Austen's novels, any more than in the family life of her class in that day. With the exception of Lizzy Bennet in "Pride and Prejudice," and Fanny Price in "Mansfield Park," the abbreviations end with the period of childhood. No perpetual Charlies and Neds, Kates or Kittys, and Babs, meet us at every step. There may be less formality in the modern practice, but there is also a suspicion of less manliness and womanliness, with their earnestness and responsibility. What serious sense of duty can be expected from a Hal, or a Loo, not to say from a Dolly representing an Adolphus, or a Dot standing as a pet name for a stately Margaret or a grandly simple Mary?

Jane Austen had a high opinion of the merit of her work. When her characters were compared to living people, she maintained stoutly that she was too proud of her gentlemen to admit that they were only Mr. A. or Colonel B., although she qualified the assertion by allow-

ing—for the credit of human nature, and for her own credit—to avoid the accusation of painting angels instead of men, that with regard to her favourites, Edmund Bertram and Mr. Knightley, they were very far from being what she knew English gentlemen often were.

In the long list—growing always longer with the years—of the distinguished admirers of Miss Austen's books, Mr. Austen Leigh quotes formidable names—formidable to those who hold an opposite view of her claims as an author. Among widely different names of men are those of Southey, Coleridge, Sir James Mackintosh, Guizot, Lord Holland, Whewell, Sydney Smith, Archbishop Whately, Sir Walter Scott,* the American statesman Quincey, and Lord Macaulay. Only one woman's name is given—that of Miss Mitford. We must hope, for the honour of intellectual and literary women, that many more names might have been added of women who have gladly and gratefully acknowledged Jane Austen as a queen of novelists. To the examples cited, large additions might be made from the names of modern thinkers and students of human nature, since among them the novelist's fame is still increasing.

Let it never be said, for women's own sakes, that it is among women—among bright, quick-witted girls such as she herself was when she wrote "Pride and Prejudice" and "Northanger Abbey," far outstripping mature competitors—that Jane Austen begins to be no longer read and revered.

In her own day, Jane Austen kept a collection of such criticisms of her books as she could come across, including in the collection various contemptuous opinions as that "one lady could say nothing better of 'Mansfield Park' than that it was a 'mere novel.'"

Another owned that "she thought 'Sense and Sen-

* Jane Austen's nephew, on visiting Abbotsford, was suffered to take into his hand one of the volumes of Sir Walter's well-worn set of her novels.

sibility' and 'Pride and Prejudice' downright nonsense, but expected to like 'Mansfield Park' better, and, having finished the first volume, hoped that she had got through the worst."

Another "did not like 'Mansfield Park.' Nothing interesting in the characters, language poor."

"One gentleman read the first and last chapters of 'Emma,' but did not look at the rest, because he had been told that it was not interesting."

"The opinions of another gentleman about 'Emma' were so bad that they could not be repeated to the author."

Among the most remarkable of the criticisms worthy of the name of Jane Austen, are those of Sir Walter Scott and Macaulay. The generous entry in Sir Walter's diary is as follows:—"Read again, for the third time at least, 'Pride and Prejudice.' That young lady had a talent for describing the involvements of feelings and characters of ordinary life, which is to me the most wonderful I ever met with. The big bow-wow strain I can do myself, like any now going; but the exquisite touch which renders ordinary commonplace things and characters interesting from the truth of the description and the sentiment, is denied to me. What a pity such a gifted creature died so early!"

Macaulay has this entry in his journal:—"I have now read once again all Miss Austen's novels—charming they are. There are in the world no compositions which approach nearer to perfection."

In Macaulay's well-known essay on Madame d'Arblay, there is, in the course of an admirable comparison between the two writers, the following high praise of Jane Austen:—

"Highest among those who have exhibited human nature by means of dialogue, stands Shakespeare. His variety is, like the variety of nature, endless diversity, scarcely any monstrosity. The characters of which he has given us an impression, as vivid as that which we receive from the characters of our own associates, are to

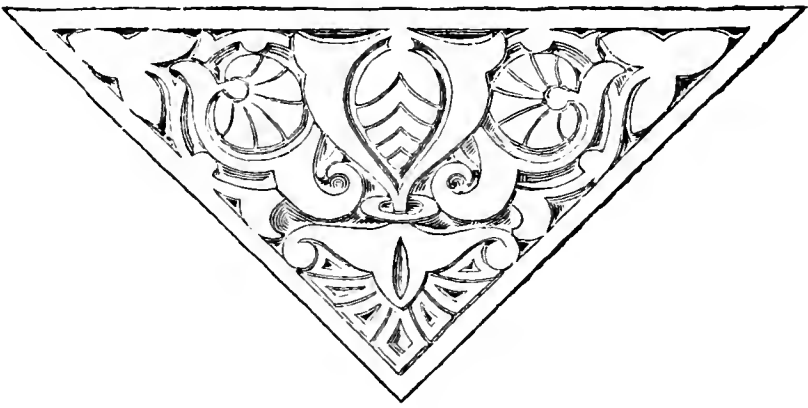
be reckoned by scores. Yet in all these scores hardly one character is to be found which deviates widely from the common standard, and which we could call very eccentric if we met it in real life. The silly rule that every man has one ruling passion, and that this clue, once known, unravels all the mysteries of his conduct, finds no countenance in the plays of Shakespeare. There man appears as he is, made up of a crowd of passions, which contend for the mastery over him, and govern him in turn. What is Hamlet's ruling passion? Or Othello's? Or Harry the Fifth's? Or Wolsey's? Or Lear's? Or Shylock's? Or Benedick's? Or Macbeth's? Or that of Cassius? Or that of Falconbridge? But we might go on for ever. Take a single example—Shylock. Is he so eager for money as to be indifferent to revenge? Or so eager for revenge as to be indifferent to money? Or so bent on both together as to be indifferent to the honour of his nation and the law of Moses? All his propensities are mingled with each other, so that, in trying to apportion to each its proper part, we find the same difficulty which constantly meets us in real life. A superficial critic may say that hatred is Shylock's ruling passion. But how many passions have amalgamated to form that hatred? It is partly the result of wounded pride: Antonio has called him dog. It is partly the result of covetousness: Antonio has hindered him of half a million; and when Antonio is gone, there will be no limit to the gains of usury. It is partly the result of national and religious feeling: Antonio has spat on the Jewish gabardine; and the oath of revenge has been sworn by the Jewish Sabbath. We might go through all the characters which we have mentioned, and through fifty more in the same way, for it is the constant manner of Shakespeare to represent the human mind as lying not under the absolute dominion of one despotic propensity, but under a mixed government, in which a hundred powers balance each other. Admirable as he was in all parts of his art, we most admire him for this, that, while he has left us a greater number of striking portraits than all other

dramatists put together, he has scarcely left us a single caricature.

“Shakespeare has neither equal nor second; but among the writers who, in the point which we have noticed, have approached nearest to the manner of the great master, we have no hesitation in placing Jane Austen, a woman of whom England is justly proud. She has given us a multitude of characters, all in a certain sense commonplace, all such as we meet every day; yet they are all as perfectly discriminated from each other as if they were the most eccentric of human beings. There are, for example, four clergymen, none of whom we should be surprised to find in any parsonage in the kingdom—Mr. Edward Ferrars, Mr. Henry Tilney, Mr. Edmund Bertram, and Mr. Elton. They are all specimens of the upper part of the middle class; they have all been liberally educated; they all lie under the restraints of the same sacred profession; they are all young; they are all in love; not one of them has any hobby-horse, to use the phrase of Sterne; not one has a ruling passion, such as we read of in Pope. Who would not have expected them to be insipid likenesses of each other? No such thing. Harpagon is not more unlike to Jourdain, Joseph Surface is not more unlike to Sir Lucius O'Trigger, than every one of Miss Austen's young divines to all of his reverend brethren. And almost all this is done by touches so delicate, that they elude analysis, that they defy the powers of description, and that we know them to exist only by the general effect to which they have contributed.”

Macaulay's sister, Lady Trevelyan, told Mr. Austen Leigh that her brother had intended to write a memoir of Jane Austen, with criticisms on her works, to prefix it to a new edition of her novels, and from the proceeds of the sale to erect a monument to her memory in Winchester Cathedral. It is said that the references to the novels in Lord Macaulay's "Journal" served to carry out his purpose so far, attracting a public which—

to its shame, shall I say?—knew not the author, and selling off a whole edition of Jane Austen's tales. That the erection of the monument in Winchester Cathedral followed is of less consequence. She needs no monument save what her brain and hands wrought out. Let her own works follow her.






JANE AUSTEN'S NOVELS, AND JANE AUSTEN.

"PRIDE AND PREJUDICE."*

I.

"T is a truth universally acknowledged that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife." Such is the lively sentence with which "Pride and Prejudice" begins. Then the author proceeds to illustrate the statement in her own admirable way.

Mr. Bingley, a young bachelor, well-born, wealthy, good-looking, agreeable, kindly-disposed—even sensible, while not too clever for his company, suddenly sets the whole country gentry of a quiet neighbourhood into a pleasant ferment, by taking a lease of Netherfield Park, and coming to occupy the house. My readers must remember that it is nearly a century ago since this happened, for it actually happened. The charm of Jane Austen's situations is that they must have happened thousands of times. Her people all lived, are living still, since human nature never dies. We may correctly think and talk of Jane and Elizabeth Bennet, and their father and mother; of Bingley and his sisters; of Darcy and his sister; as if they were real men and women. They were and are the very men and women whom our grandfathers knew, whom we

* Written in 1796-97.

know and visit, like and dislike, marry and refuse to marry.

A few customs have changed: greater breathing-space has come into every-day intercourse with better education, increased facilities of helping ourselves, moving about and knowing our neighbours—not only in the next parsonage and country house, or at most in a popular watering-place, but in the busy, endless streets of London, or up in the romantic glens of the Scotch highlands, or still farther away, in nooks of the Apennines, or recesses of the Black Forest. Such revolutions on revolutions have occurred in dress, that we have come back from the antipodes of one fashion to the same fashion again, looking new and fresh once more on the lithe figures and about the blooming faces of our nineteenth-century girls. Still we do not see a young lady, her hair in turret curls, wearing a low-necked gown long before even her early dinner-hour, and holding above her head, as a much-needed protection, one of the first specimens of the original large, green, tent-shaped parasols such as I remember in a representation of Elizabeth Bennet, when she accompanied Lady Catherine de Bourgh to their memorable interview in the wilderness on one side of the lawn at Longbourn. Wildernesses, in their turn, have disappeared; certain phrases have grown obsolete; but the men and women who led that kind of life, dressed in a style which, when we do not chance to be familiar with it, we insist on regarding as *outré*, and spoke in a manner half racy, half precise, are among us still, and will always be among us, with merely slight superficial differences.

But I wish to recall, at this moment, the distant date of “Pride and Prejudice,” in order to say that the arrival of a young man like Charles Bingley, or “Bingley,” as he is called in the old use of surnames in conversation, was a much greater event to a country circle then, than it could be now.

It would still be a good deal—witness the use of

the same situation in the clever modern novel, "Mr. Smith." But the class of women who are powerfully affected by Mr. Smith's appearance on the scene, and who make him the centre of all their hopes and plans, are altogether inferior, socially and intellectually, to the women with whom Jane Austen dealt.

About a hundred years ago "to paint tables, cover screens, and net purses," formed the general standard of girls' accomplishments—a standard which did not furnish many topics of conversation. It is the girls' own fault if they have not wider interests to-day. Therefore, those among them who are in a fever of curiosity when a new comer crosses their path, are decidedly lower in the scale, in every respect, than the gossips were in the time of Jane Austen.

We are first introduced to the Bennets of Longbourn in their animated discussion of the welcome event in their quiet lives. Soon we know the family intimately. We find vulgar, shallow Mrs. Bennet assailing her husband with unvarnished arguments that he ought to be one of the first to call on their new neighbour "for the sake of his daughters."

We listen with much amusement to eccentric, witty, Mr. Bennet, who has married his wife for her beauty, and seeks compensation for her silliness in laughing at it on all occasions, in those mocking, terse little speeches, in which he responds to her profuse "my dears" with an answering flow of "my dears," while he takes her off, to her broad, over-blown face, unsuspected by her, at every word.

The two elder daughters are the cream of the family. Jane is lovely and loveable. Her good understanding is so well balanced by her gentle, tolerant temper that she is able to bear patiently and tenderly with her mother's foibles, including her vain-glory in Jane's beauty. Jane is so fair, sweet, and reasonable in the most unassuming fashion, that she cannot help winning—without any effort at popularity—good opinions on all sides, even from the most unlikely quarters.

Elizabeth, with her fine eyes, brown skin, light, graceful figure, nimble feet in dancing, nimble tongue in talking, is a warm-hearted, softened, womanly edition of the father whose favourite she is. In answer to the covert reproach once addressed to her, that the wisest and best of men—nay, the wisest and best of their actions—may be rendered ridiculous by a person whose first object in life is a joke, she defends herself frankly yet earnestly, and we feel it is Jane Austen speaking for herself by the lips of Elizabeth Bennet. “Certainly there are such people, but I hope I am not one of them. I hope I never ridicule what is wise and good. Follies and nonsense, whims and inconsistencies, do divert me, I own, and I laugh at them whenever I can.” Withal, this laughter-loving girl, in spite of her naturally hasty conclusions and rash judgments, struggles so faithfully to be fair, is so candid in confessing her mistakes and submitting to pay the penalty when they are brought home to her—she is at once so frank and fearless, yet so dutiful and reverent in the middle of her innocent daring, so unselfish and devoted in her sisterly attachment, so true a woman, so thorough a lady, that while we willingly respect and like the more faultless Jane, we do more, we love the more tempted and tried Elizabeth.

It is good for young readers of the present day to look at Elizabeth Bennet, and learn to discriminate between the sparkling intelligence and gay, sweet temper of the good, kind, young girl in her lawful attractiveness, and the miserable travesty of her in many modern heroines, in whom profanity and levity do duty for wit, audacious ignorance for originality, and coarse licence for nobility of nature.

The bond of sisterhood, more than any other relation, seems to have influenced Jane Austen in her art. With her own closest life-long friend in her sister Cassandra, the author who so rarely repeats herself in the circumscribed sphere in which she chose to work, again and again draws a pair of sisters, for the most part sharing

every joy and sorrow.* In two or three cases—those of the Bennets, the Dashwoods, Mrs. John Knightley and Emma Woodhouse, we have the contrast between the milder and more serene elder, and the livelier, more impulsive younger sister, which caused their contemporaries to say that Jane and Elizabeth Bennet stood for Cassandra and Jane Austen. But the author's nephew pronounced against this conjecture. It is said, indeed, that in gentleness of disposition and tenderness of heart Jane Austen bore more resemblance to Jane than to Elizabeth Bennet.

Mary Bennet, the third daughter in the household at Longbourn, and the plainest member of a handsome family, tries to supplement her deficient personal attractions by such mental acquirements and accomplishments as are within her reach. These are laboriously learnt for the purpose of display. In contrast to her sister Elizabeth, she has no natural shrewdness. She is a pedantic, sententious young goose, with her elaborate exhibition of worthless knowledge and formal speeches out of commonplace books. Mary Bennet contrives to render herself as ridiculous as her younger sisters, Kitty and Lydia, who are precocious, noisy girls of seventeen and fifteen. They are too unformed and callow to be treated separately at first, but we have one significant distinction between them. Lydia, big and bouncing for her age, already arrogating rights from being the tallest of the family, spoilt by her mother, invariably takes the lead. Kitty simply runs after her more headstrong junior. The most individual trait Kitty shows is the peevish impatience of contradiction which belongs to a weak character.

We may remark, by the way, that Jane Austen, while she cuttingly condemns pedantry and conceit,

* Besides Jane and Elizabeth Bennet, we have Ellinor and Marianne Dashwood, Anne and Lucy Steele, Henrietta and Louisa Musgrove, among the sisters who have most things in common; and as couples of unsympathetic and rival sisters there are Elizabeth and Anne Elliot, and Maria and Julia Bertram.

never dreams of offering a premium to sheer juvenility, empty-headedness, and frivolity, after the example of some of the strange preferences which are presented for the consideration and edification of nineteenth-century readers.

Miss Lydia and Miss Kitty Bennet spend the chief part of each day in walking to Meryton, a market town, where a militia regiment is stationed, which, unhappily for the growth in wisdom of the young ladies, is situated only a mile from the village of Longbourn, and Longbourn House, their home.

In Meryton dwells Mrs. Philips, Mrs. Bennet's sister, the wife of a country attorney in a lower social grade than the Bennets. Good-natured, commonplace Mrs. Philips is gratified by her nieces' company, and willing to indulge them with any amount of dawdling and gossiping in her house. When no better goal presents itself, the shop windows, with the latest bonnets and muslins, are always to be had. Above all, there is the chance of encountering some of the militia officers in their regimentals—those dazzling red coats, which filled the imaginations of girls like Lydia and Kitty Bennet, and which were not without their picturesque merits even in the more reflective eyes of the elder sisters. Well for girls that they have no regimentals, worn off parade, to turn their heads to-day. If they are still caught by the pomp and circumstance of glorious war, and enthralled by its blatant trumpeting, at least, the “red rags,” which are now for the most part kept sedulously out of sight, are no longer to blame.

Mr. Bennet calls on Mr. Bingley, as he has always meant to do, in spite of all his protests to the contrary, but the sisters first meet the hero at a Meryton assembly.

That was the era of assemblies—subscription balls, in rooms provided for card-playing and supping as well as dancing, under highly respectable auspices, given at regular intervals in all the country towns, and duly patronised by gentle and simple, clergy and laity.

If people stayed all the year round and year after

year in their own quiet country neighbourhood, some recreation must be provided for them. The assemblies were at once simple and social. The stereotyped recreations of the last century were dancing and card-playing. If both were liable to grave abuse, we may still hope that many worthy people used them temperately and not unconscientiously.

A rousing report had gone beforehand through the ball-goers that the already popular Mr. Bingley was to crown his popularity by attending the assembly, and bringing with him twelve ladies and six gentlemen. The reality falls short of the rumour, but there is consolation to the belles of the place in the dwindling down of the dozen strange ladies into Mr. Bingley's two sisters, one married and one unmarried, even though the six gentlemen also fade away into a couple, one of whom is Mr. Hurst, the husband of Mr. Bingley's married sister. But for half the time the ball lasts the other gentleman makes up for every defalcation, and is a power in himself. He is not only a tall, handsome, distinguished-looking young man, he is also discovered to be allied to the peerage, and to possess a large estate in Derbyshire, with an unencumbered rent-roll of ten thousand a-year—and here gossips' tongues do not wag too wildly.

But the exultation over such a guest is soon damped by his cold, reserved manners. The stranger dances once with Mrs. Hurst and once with Miss Bingley, speaks only to the members of his own party, and declines any introductions. And Meryton is spirited enough to resent the inference. If Mr. Darcy considers himself above his company, the company decline any further homage to his air and figure—even to his estate in Derbyshire.

In fact, Mr. Darcy is clever, proud, fastidious—conceiving himself entitled by his many undeniable advantages, which, however, he does not wear generously and genially, to his pride and fastidiousness.

A man in a similar position may very well be

tempted to corresponding faults still, but even with a later code of manners disfigured by laziness, self-indulgence, and superciliousness, such arrogant haughtiness as Darcy betrayed, could hardly now be entertained by a man of Darcy's sense and worth, and even if entertained, would no longer be openly exhibited in modern society. Local magnates were formerly permitted the tone of small sovereigns, and even when they were from home they were not required to come down from the heights of their overweening dignity and exclusiveness.

It is at so early a stage of their acquaintance as this important Meryton assembly that Bingley, accessible and agreeable to everybody, and dancing every dance, as a young man ought, shows his admiration of the sweet young beauty of the room—Jane Bennet, of Longbourn—by distinguishing her among his partners. He dances twice—one may say four times, with her—for we must remember that the old social, quaintly-performed, quaintly-named country dances were generally arranged in double sets. The couple who danced down the first were landed, so to speak, at the bottom of the second, up which they had to work their way, and then dance down a second time. A very respectable portion of time was thus employed. There were natural and graceful opportunities afforded for making friends, and for engaging, while still in a crowd, unexposed to invidious notice and comment, in cheerful or sentimental, more or less brilliant conversation *à deux*, but not so much *à deux* that the speakers could not fall apart and talk by way of variety to the ladies and gentlemen, whom the couple were pretty sure to know, standing above and below them in the set. Jane Austen repeatedly uses these country dances as a means to the speedy acquaintance of her young people. We have it on record that she herself had a hearty enjoyment in dancing, and was, like Anna Maria Porter and Susannah Blamire, a proficient in what was then held a peculiarly elegant accomplishment for a young lady. She was not, therefore, likely to undervalue the merely graceful exer-

cise of dancing. Still, dancing must have been to her, as no doubt it was to her heroes and heroines, a fitting excuse for conversation—sensible as well as sprightly, serious enough sometimes, without any consciousness of incongruity in being in earnest in the middle of a country dance.

I may be told that there is an ample and better provision for a *tête à tête* in the conspicuous or the secluded saunter between the rapid whirls of round dances, but to my mind the earlier mode was the more daintily decorous, the freer from compromise, not to say the more social. One is tempted to wish back again the old English country dances, in which fathers and mothers, sons and daughters, often stood up in the same dance, and went with merry method through the intricate mazes with the suggestive names, “The White Cockade,” dating from the Jacobite rebellion, “The Wind that Shook the Barley,” of Irish origin, “The Country Bumpkin,” an English measure, “Petronella” and the “Boulanger,” like the Cotillon, of French descent. Will they not return, with the Queen Anne furniture and the Gainsborough costumes, and take their places along with the time-honoured “Sir Roger de Coverley?”

Mr. Bingley’s promising preference for Jane Bennet in these significant four dances is artlessly enough hailed by all her friends and neighbours, and ingenuously owned by herself to her dear sister and confidante, Lizzy.

It is at this ball, too, that Darcy makes that slighting speech within earshot of Elizabeth, which starts their acquaintance on an entirely wrong footing.

Elizabeth Bennet, with her own unapproachable gifts of eyes, and tongue, and toes, is a belle only second to her sister, and it is an unwonted experience for her to be sitting down during a couple of dances for lack of a partner. As if that were not enough, she has the mortification of hearing the repulse given to the well-disposed but rash assault which Bingley at that moment makes on his impracticable friend standing near her.

“Come, Darcy,” cries the amiable, indefatigable

dancer, "I must have you dance. I hate to have you standing about by yourself in this stupid manner. You had much better dance."

"I certainly shall not," declines Darcy. "You know how I detest it, unless I am particularly acquainted with my partner." He adds that Bingley's sisters are engaged, and that there is not another woman in the room with whom it would not be a punishment to him to stand up.

Bingley cries out at his friend's fastidiousness, and maintains he has never met so many pleasant girls in his life as on that evening, and there are several of them uncommonly pretty.

"You are dancing with the only handsome girl in the room," says Darcy, looking at the eldest Miss Bennet.

"Oh! she is the most beautiful creature I ever beheld," vows Bingley, with effusion. "But there is one of her sisters sitting down just behind you who is very pretty, and I daresay very agreeable. Do let me ask my partner to introduce you."

"Which do you mean?" asks Darcy, and, turning round, he looks for a moment at Elizabeth, till, catching her eye, he withdraws his own, and coldly says, "She is tolerable, but not handsome enough to tempt me, and I am in no humour at present to give consequence to young ladies who are slighted by other young men. You had better return to your partner, and enjoy her smiles, for you are wasting your time with me."

Was ever heroine so put down in her own hearing? Elizabeth, we are told, remains with no very cordial feelings towards the offender, but, being the bright young girl she is, she makes stock of the incident by telling the story with great spirit among her friends; and for the superb Mr. Darcy there is a proper punishment preparing.

Mr. Bingley's sisters are drawn with a few fine touches. They are fashionable, stylish-looking women, each possessing a fortune of twenty thousand pounds. They have a great opinion of their own claims, and a

corresponding disdain of what they reckon the greatly inferior claims of others. With all their polish and *savoir faire*, which enable them to be entertaining when they like, they are always arrogant and ill-bred, and can be insolent when provoked.

Yet even Mrs. Hurst and Miss Bingley are attracted by beautiful, gentle Jane Bennet, and drawn into the semblance of a friendship for her. They are too independent and too far removed, as they conceive, from such rivalry, to experience any jealousy, or to take alarm on their brother's account, till matters have gone a considerable length between Bingley and Jane.

Among other minor characters in the book are the Lucas family, who occupy the next county house, and are the nearest neighbours of the Bennets, and on intimate terms with them. Charlotte Lucas, the eldest daughter, a plain-looking, but sensible and agreeable young woman of seven and twenty, is Elizabeth Bennet's great friend after her sister Jane. Charlotte's father, Sir William, has been in trade, from which he has retired on the accident of receiving the honour of knighthood. He was always civil and obliging, and from the great era in his life he became elaborately courteous, with *bourgeois* fine manners. He is profuse in good-natured—sometimes *mal-à-propos*—compliments. Thus, at a large party at Lucas Lodge, the host blandly praises Darcy—for his dancing of all things, and then, struck with the notion of doing a gallant thing, arrests Elizabeth Bennet, who is passing them: "My dear Miss Eliza, why are not you dancing? Mr. Darcy, you must allow me to present this young lady to you as a very desirable partner. You cannot refuse to dance, I am sure, when so much beauty is at hand."

Have we not all known, at some period in our lives, the well-intentioned, obtuse, complacent, slightly Brummagem Sir William, who can be terrible, without the slightest suspicion of it, on occasions?

Elizabeth draws back, and refuses the partner very decidedly, and her resistance does her no harm with the

gentleman, though he has really not been unwilling to lend himself to Sir William's clumsy move.

In truth, the stately, grave Mr. Darcy, after refusing to see anything worth the trouble of bestowing his notice in Elizabeth Bennet—after taking the greatest pains to convince all his party that she has not got a good feature in her face—becomes keenly alive to the charm of that face, and captivated by the animation and archness which neither fear his censure nor solicit his favour. For Elizabeth simply regards him as the man who makes himself disagreeable everywhere, and who has spoken slightly of herself. She is happily careless of his pretensions. What are his birth, estate, intellect, and person to her? With her it is “handsome is that handsome does.”

And Darcy, with all his faults, has enough sterling manliness and merit to be not piqued, but strangely attracted by her easy indifference to his worldly advantages, combined as it is with the girl's quick intelligence and happy, winning playfulness.

We appreciate, too, the independent spirit which causes Darcy to make no secret of his change of opinion; not that it is a matter of much consequence to his mind, for a Darcy of Pemberley can never lower himself in his own eyes, or those of his world, by marrying the daughter of a poor, second-rate country gentleman, whose wife has been taken from an inferior professional circle. What is a great deal worse, the whole family of the Bennets, with the exception of Jane and Elizabeth, are more or less objectionable—Mr. Bennet in indulging his caustic humour in total disregard of the figures his wife and daughters cut in society; Mrs. Bennet, in continually exposing her vulgarity and folly; Mary Bennet, in rendering herself a laughing-stock by her assumption of learning and wisdom, with small claims to the same. As for Lydia and Kitty Bennet, while there are militia officers in Meryton the girls will flirt with them; and while Meryton remains at a mile's distance from Longbourn, the younger Miss Bennets will go there every day.

But Darcy, in the face of the pronounced dislike to the second Miss Bennet entertained by his friend's sisters—one of whom is laying close siege to Darcy's hand and heart—calmly revokes his judgment, announces his admiration of Elizabeth's eyes, and defends her vivacity from the charge of pertness. It is in vain Miss Bingley, with her eyes sharpened by jealousy, takes the woman's method to drive him from his position by chaffing exaggeration of his sentiments, and malicious predictions of his future experiences with his mother-in-law; asking him if he will have his Elizabeth's uncle, the attorney's, portrait, opposite that of his uncle, the judge's, and whether it may not be advisable for him to restrain that something in the coming Mrs. Darcy's manners which borders on impertinence. Darcy stands to his colours, so far as admiring Elizabeth Bennet, and owning to the admiration, are concerned.

Elizabeth is so thoroughly without suspicion of her modified conquest, that when she finds Mr. Darcy looking at her, listening to her, and taking up his station in the quarter of a room where he can see and hear her better, she is so puzzled for his reasons, that she is compelled to conclude there is something about her peculiarly repugnant to his taste and sense of propriety; and being of the temper which she supposes, she fancies he takes a certain satisfaction in reckoning up her deficiencies. When he asks her to dance, she is so surprised that she accepts the unwelcome honour before she knows what she is doing; and then, provoked with her mechanical compliance, she seeks revenge in trying to behave in the manner most disagreeable to him. She will go down the double set in unbroken silence, so far as the conversation rests with her; and she is aware young Darcy is a quiet, grave man, while she is well known as a ready, gay talker. All at once it strikes her that a solemn mute performance of their duty as dancers may be exactly what he wishes; and then she challenges him, in an archly-defiant speech, to make conversation for her. After all

he is nothing loth, though she does provoke and offend him by the determined conviction she constantly shows that they are two persons of entirely different characters and inclinations, and by her wilful, half-jesting misunderstanding of his feelings and opinions.

On one occasion he is led into the admission that he has an unyielding temper. His good opinion once lost is lost for ever.

“That is a failing indeed,” cried Elizabeth. “Implacable resentment is a shade in a character. But you have chosen your fault well; I really cannot laugh at it. You are safe from me.”

The girl’s mingled light-hearted banter and vehement antagonism form, after all, part of her fascination; and we are told that against any affront they inflict she has a powerful pleader in the feeling she has already excited in Darcy’s breast.

The progress of Bingley’s lover-like attentions to Jane, and Darcy’s brisk skirmishing with Elizabeth, is considerably accelerated by a visit of almost a week’s duration paid perforce by the girls to Netherfield.

Jane had been invited to dine with the two ladies of the house, to relieve their dulness in the absence of the gentlemen, who were dining with the officers in Meryton. She had been detained by rain in the first place, and by a violent cold in the second.

Elizabeth hearing of her sister’s illness, and being unable to procure the carriage, set out and walked the three miles between Longbourn and Netherfield. She was fearless of fatigue, or the accusation of unfeminine, unladylike independence of escort. She was equal to muddy roads, intervening stiles, and the cool reception she was likely to receive from Miss Bingley, so that Elizabeth could but relieve her anxiety concerning Jane, reach her, and be a comfort in nursing her through her little illness.

Elizabeth arrives with draggled skirts and rosy cheeks. She cheerfully surmounts Miss Bingley’s and Mrs. Hurst’s contemptuous amazement at what they

regard as Miss Eliza Bennet's uncalled-for Amazonian feat. At last they are under the necessity, in common civility, of requesting Elizabeth to remain with her sister; and the patient, suffering Jane is ill enough for the moment to make Elizabeth thankful that she has come, and to justify her in the step she has taken.

Besides, Elizabeth is gratified by the master of the house's cordial reception, and by his unfeigned anxiety on behalf of his invalid guest. As to the fact that Darcy is successful in silencing the strictures of the ladies of the house on the "fright" Miss Eliza Bennet has chosen to appear before them, by dwelling on the additional brilliancy the early walk has lent to her complexion, and by maintaining that certainly the expedition proves her to be a most affectionate sister, Elizabeth remains profoundly ignorant of his championship.

Two new figures appear on the stage. The first is Mr. Collins, the vicar of Hunsford, in Kent, and the cousin, hitherto a stranger to the Bennet family, who, by the terms of the entail, succeeds to the Longbourn estate after Mr. Bennet's death. He proposes a friendly visit, in a letter which is the reflex of the writer, who is a stupid, narrow-minded young man, while yet perfectly respectable and not ill-intentioned. His pompous self-importance, in which there is some family likeness to the leading mental traits in his cousin Mary Bennet, is blended with an equally natural subserviency and obsequiousness, with such a breadth of skill and comicality, that he is one of the great artist's triumphs.

Jane Austen was a good woman and a good church-woman. She was a clergyman's daughter, and two of her brothers were clergymen. The parsonage as well as the hall had a special place in her novels. In "Mansfield Park" she insisted on the honourable office of a clergyman. She was the last person wantonly to bring disrespect on her father's cloth, but she was also the most sincere of women and of artists. She was acquainted with the Collins type of clergymen, which had replaced the still more accommodating, even vicious, family

chaplain, under the lower and coarser moral standard of previous generations. Her Mr. Collins is not unprincipled or unconscientious, but his patroness engrosses his small, mean mind, and usurps the rights of his other parishioners ; until, to give satisfaction at the great house—to come in there as an acknowledged, privileged dependent—to carve a joint—to help to make up the card-table—to amuse the old and the young—to pass away a dull hour—to take upon himself any troublesome task he can appropriate, are looked upon by him as at once among his chief duties and greatest advantages.

With unshrinking, incisive hand, Jane Austen did good service to all the churches by aiding in ridding them of despicable toadies.

Mr. Collins is all in a piece, while he is of complex fabric, with his haunting self-consciousness, his perpetual references to his “humble abode,” and his “revered patroness, Lady Catherine,” with her splendid establishment at Rosings, to which he is so affably summoned several times a week. His densely thick-headed, sycophantish homage is extended to Lady Catherine’s kindred in the person of her nephew, the resisting, disgusted Mr. Darcy. Mr. Collins’s self-complacent, over-done, heavy civility is bestowed freely on everybody, and he promises liberally beforehand formal letters of thanks to his hosts for their esteemed hospitality.

Such a man, however diverting to her strong sense of the ludicrous, cannot but be odious in other respects to Elizabeth Bennet, yet it is at Elizabeth’s feet that he lays his dull, conceited, exasperatingly considerate proposals.

Lady Catherine is of opinion Mr. Collins, as a clergyman, should marry soon. His solid merits and unexceptionable position in life warrant him in seeking a wife. He is led to Longbourn with the laudable intention of making some reparation to his fair cousins for the circumstance that, on the death of their respected father, Mr. Collins must inherit the property ; and in Elizabeth he flatters himself he has found the excellent, charming,

economical young woman who will at once secure to him the felicity he is entitled to expect, and satisfy the just expectations of Lady Catherine.

To the extreme mortification of her mother, but with the entire approval of her father, Elizabeth declines the obliging proposal. The scene is unique and unapproachable, in which the sublimely confident, quite unembarrassed Mr. Collins does not so much plead his cause solemnly as unfold his credentials, while Elizabeth refuses him in stronger and stronger language, for the suitor will not accept his *congé*, and persists in attributing it to the becoming coyness of "an elegant female."

At last Elizabeth escapes, referring Mr. Collins to her father, protesting in despair that whatever his answer may be, at least Mr. Collins cannot interpret Mr. Bennet's behaviour as the becoming coyness of "an elegant female."

Mr. Collins' heart is scarcely touched, but his vanity—thick-skinned as it is—has received a wound, for which, however, there is a speedy cure, since within three days he transfers his suit with the happiest result to Elizabeth's friend Charlotte Lucas, who has not hesitated to plan this conclusion.

Elizabeth is amazed and hurt at the absence of right principle and feeling on the part of Charlotte, who has been so quickly wooed and won—nay, who has herself stooped to woo a man for whom she can have neither respect nor regard.

But in Jane Bennet's remonstrances against the hard terms which Elizabeth uses when speaking of the marriage—in the emphasis with which the elder sister dwells on Mr. Collins' respectable establishment as well as his unblemished character—above all, in the way in which Charlotte's choice is made to turn out tolerably well for her in the end, we find that Jane Austen, while revolting at the conduct which she herself could never have practised, is inclined so far to endorse the reasoning of the prudent, steady gentlewoman who has offended against Elizabeth's nobler instincts.

“Without thinking highly either of men or matrimony,” Jane Austen says of Charlotte Lucas, “marriage had always been her object: *it was the only honourable provision for well-educated young women of small fortune, and, however uncertain of giving happiness, must be their pleasantest preservation from want.* This preservation she had now obtained; and at the age of twenty-seven, without having ever been handsome, she felt all the good luck of it.”

Poor Mrs. Bennet’s chagrin is complete. She is deprived of the opportunity of “marrying” one of her daughters very fairly. Lady Lucas is to have a daughter married first. And Charlotte Lucas is eventually to supplant Mrs. Bennet in her own house of Longbourn. Can the irony of destiny go farther?

The other new comer appears in a fresh officer who joins the militia regiment in Meryton. He is a Mr. Wickham, a young man of exceedingly attractive looks and manners, being as universally agreeable and sympathetic as Darcy is the reverse.

Elizabeth Bennet and Mr. Wickham are mutually struck with each other on their introduction in the High Street of Meryton, and the impression at first sight is confirmed when they spend an evening in company together, at a tea and supper party given by Mrs. Philips, the Bennets’ aunt.

Wickham’s place in the round game of cards for the young people is between Elizabeth and her boisterous young sister Lydia, who would have proceeded to engross the gentleman had it not been for the rival attractions of the game of “Lottery Tickets,” and her zeal in acquiring mother-of-pearl fishes—the old counters.

Elizabeth and Wickham are permitted to talk together and to discover how their views and tastes coincide. Not the least bond of union is the confirmation of Elizabeth’s worst prejudices against Mr. Darcy. Wickham happens also to be a Derbyshire man, and he has actually been brought up in the most intimate

relations with the Darcys. Wickham's father was the confidential agent of Darcy's father, who had been George Wickham's godfather, and had charged himself with educating and providing for the lad. By appearing to respond unwillingly to the roused curiosity of Elizabeth, and by the flattery of giving her the idea that he is confiding in her alone, the young man manages, without seeming to be publicly proclaiming his wrongs, to convey to her the information of how badly he has been treated by young Darcy. This haughty, hard, unscrupulous man has defrauded his early companion of the church living bequeathed to him by his godfather. Darcy has a young sister, Georgiana, who had been very fond of her father's favourite when he petted and played with her as a child, but her brother has infected her with the inordinate pride and selfishness of the family, and set her also against Wickham.

Elizabeth drinks in the whole story, which is a testimony to her own acuteness, is full of pity for Wickham and of wrath against Darcy.

The younger Miss Bennets have teased Mr. Bingley to give a ball, which comes off with great *éclat* at Netherfield. The host's attentions to Jane Bennet are the talk of the room.

Mrs. Bennet goes so completely off her head that, to the intense mortification and shame of Elizabeth, she overhears her mother enlarging on her eldest daughter's brilliant prospects to Lady Lucas, at the supper-table, with so little reserve, that Elizabeth is sure Darcy, who is opposite, is listening—first with grave surprise, and afterwards with an unsuppressed expression of scorn.

Indeed, poor Elizabeth is doomed to experience anything rather than pleasure at the long-looked-forward-to, much-talked-of, ball at Netherfield. In the earlier part of the evening she is disappointed by the non-appearance of Wickham with the other officers; and she is full of resentment against Darcy for having either deprived him of an invitation, or caused the injured young man to avoid the painful encounter, though he had expressly

told his warm adherent that it was not for him to go out of Mr. Darcy's way.

Under the irritation produced by this suspicion, Elizabeth, when Darcy seeks her out, turns upon him with serious instead of playful antagonism. She mentions Wickham's name, for the express purpose of observing Darcy's annoyance. She provokes him to the cold observation that Mr. Wickham is well qualified to attract friends, but it remains to be seen whether he is equally fitted to retain them.

Elizabeth's blood boils at the insinuation from the man who has so wronged her friend.

Then, as if the evil genius of the family had been at work, not Mrs. Bennet alone, but more of Elizabeth's relations, make themselves obnoxious to censure and ridicule. Mary in her conceit consents, with her weak voice, to sing an after-supper song; and when it is received with forced approval, she volunteers to give another, amidst the covert smiles of her audience.

Elizabeth looks in agony to her father to interfere, lest Mary should go on singing all night; and he crowns the trying situation by one of his most ironical, disconcerting speeches.

"That will do extremely well, child. You have delighted us long enough. Let the other young ladies have time to exhibit."

One word on the terribly keen young eyes with which Elizabeth Bennet sees the faults and follies of her family, including her mother's silliness, and the objectionable behaviour of her father in amusing himself at the expense of his wife, so as to risk rendering her an object of contempt in the eyes of her children.

No doubt, Elizabeth Bennet does not dream of being anything save respectful and dutiful to her father and mother; whom she addresses commonly with the old-fashioned, ceremonious "Sir" or "Madam." The partiality of the former to her not only fills the young girl with honest filial pride, but it touches her indescribably

at a crisis in her history. She seeks to screen her mother, and she strives to improve her younger sisters.

Elizabeth Bennet would have died rather than proclaimed the shortcomings of her family—far less have been so lost to all wholesome shame as to have made game of what formed her greatest affliction. She is removed, by a world of good principle and good feeling, from those heroines of the present day whose authors write as if they considered the absence of all reverence and tenderness, in the sacred relation in which children stand to parents, as a mark of emancipation from old-fashioned prejudices, of freedom from what is goody-goody, narrow and obsolete. These desperately ill-bred, benighted, worse than heathen young people, in their professed confessions to the public, or their confidences to their fellow-puppets, speak evil of dignities with a vengeance, have nothing save an ugly grimace or a heartless gibe for all that is honourable in years, wisdom, or virtue, and for all that is holy in natural affection. They pour forth their railings and mockings at the authors of their being with an absolute profanity, a base disloyalty, and an absence of common decency in their family disclosures, which would be altogether horrible and hideous, were it not also absurdly false and despicable, as well as odious.

Elizabeth Bennet was a very different being—an essentially Christian and civilized gentlewoman.

But one is impelled to wish that, especially where her mother was concerned, there had been a greater reluctance, even an incapability, to judge and condemn—a piteous veil drawn by the strong over the weak, in a relationship in which these attributes ought to have been reversed. For, whether the offence be wickedness or vulgarity,—

“A mother is a mother still,
The holiest thing alive.”

Jane Austen would have said probably that if Elizabeth Bennet's nearest relations were guilty of impropriety

and folly, she could not help seeing it. We know that the author herself was very happy in the family relations of which she proved herself worthy. She was a devoted daughter and loving sister, tempted to rest content with her own family circle, and to refuse, with a certain refined churlishness, other and wider associations. She may have been in his position who

“Jests at scars that never felt a wound.”

She could hardly perhaps realise, though she excelled in realising, how a good, affectionate girl, while forced in her sense and sincerity to condemn the failings of her kindred, yet instinctively shuts her eyes to them, so far as she can do so without moral injury to herself and others; or sees them through a half-shrouding mist of eager respect and faithful fondness for the merits which, in most cases, we may be thankful, balance the failings.

Besides, Jane Austen was very young when she wrote “Pride and Prejudice,” and gentle in some respects as youth may be, it is not from it that we are warranted in expecting charity. Youth at its best—a very sweet best, but with its sweetness consisting mainly of the unbounded promise of still better things—is in its ignorance, rashness, and unshaken self-confidence, impatient of all wrong-doing, nay, of all blundering, and intolerant to the wrong-doers and blunderers. It would be to rob the bountifulness of riper years of one of their chief gains if we were to deny them their prerogative of greater long-suffering with stupidity and pity for error.

In none of her other novels was Miss Austen quite so unsparing in her censure and withering in her satire—sufficiently provoked though it was—as in “Pride and Prejudice.” She is gentle to the comparatively harmless, kindly silliness and selfishness of Lady Bertram in “Mansfield Park;” while she is really tender, with a touch of pathos, to that worthiest and most lovable of old chatterboxes, Miss Bates, in “Emma.”

The Netherfield ball is fatal to Jane Bennet’s interest,

innocent as Jane is of any of the family misdemeanors on the occasion. Bingley has to leave the next day for London, from which he certainly means to return soon. But his sisters and friend suddenly make up their minds to follow him, with the intention, if they can manage it, that the household shall not come back to Netherfield for the winter. Caroline Bingley communicates the news of the step, which takes the whole neighbourhood by surprise, in a plausible note to the victim, Jane.

Elizabeth reads between the lines, and discerns the truth, that the sisters and Mr. Darcy have at last taken alarm, and are bent on putting an end to the attachment on Mr. Bingley's part before it has gone the length of a declaration, by detaining the naturally light-hearted, easily-impressed young fellow among the excitements and distractions of the town, away from Netherfield.

The sequel shows the conspirators successful. Sweet Jane Bennet is ruthlessly jilted, while bearing no malice, and insisting in her confidential intercourse with her sister that the affair has been all a mistake, caused by her fancy, the partiality of her friends, and Bingley's amiable desire to please. She declares she is sure she will soon forget it, and be as happy as before.

In the meantime, Jane has to endure the mortification of hearing her mother lament, openly and loudly, over the ill-usage which her daughter has received.

The modern match-making mother has more guile, if she is not more delicate-minded, than to betray her feelings in a similarly unreserved fashion.

Elizabeth hotly resents the wrong done to her dear and gentle sister, is furious with Darcy and Miss Bingley, and begins to despise Bingley for proving a mere tool in the hands of his friends, whose interference in his affairs has been utterly unjustifiable.

Elizabeth and Wickham's mutual preference goes no further. She says afterwards that every girl within visiting distance of Meryton lost her senses for a time where the winning young officer was concerned. But she herself did not lose her senses to such an extent as

to be beyond recovering them ; though the only remonstrance which reached her was on the indiscretion of allowing herself to be drawn into an attachment and engagement with a penniless officer, while she herself was little better provided for in a worldly sense, so that their marriage must either be impossible, or an event long deferred.

The warning, no doubt, has a mercenary ring, especially for young readers ; but such worldly considerations were simply held reasonable in Jane Austen's days, and reckless disregard of consequences and headstrong wilfulness in marriage, as in any other affair in life, were not qualities held up for admiration.

At the same time, Jane Austen was too true a woman not to deprecate what amounted to cold-blooded, calculating caution in marriage. More than once she exposes its fallacy and danger, and she has devoted a whole novel to show the injury which may be inflicted by over-carefulness on the part of a well-intentioned friend, and by over-submissiveness on the side of an amiable girl, in breaking off an engagement with a young man who had only his high character and hope of rising in his profession as hostages to fortune.

Elizabeth Bennet and Wickham's mere liking for each other rather dwindles away after a time than meets with a sharp check ; and Elizabeth considers that if they had been sufficiently in love they might have justifiably faced the risks of a long engagement and a poor marriage—even while she tries to be so hardened and cynical a philosopher as to think and say that Wickham is doing what he ought in withdrawing his attentions gradually from her, and setting himself to pay his addresses to a girl in Meryton who has nothing in particular to distinguish her save that she has recently inherited a fortune. This worldly argument is forced work by Elizabeth, and when she is a very little older and wiser she recants, and is affronted by the coarseness of sentiment into which her determination to be indifferent and reasonable had led her.

II.

In the following spring Elizabeth Bennet accompanies Sir William Lucas and his daughter Maria, travelling post, to pay her old friend Charlotte a visit in her Kent parsonage.

Any little awkwardness and coolness—there never was estrangement—between the friends have died out; “a good memory is inexcusable in such a case.” Elizabeth only recollects that she was Mr. Collins’ first choice when she has a passing comical impression that he is showing off his excellent garden and comfortable house, not without a design of letting her feel all she has lost.

But Mr. Collins is well content, as he may be, with the sensible, good-tempered wife who, in making the best of the home she has secured for herself, fully recognises that it is for her dignity to keep up his; though she encourages him to spend a great part of his time in working in his garden, and has her sitting-room at the back of the house, since, if it had commanded a view of the lane, and the passers-by, it would have been apt to entail on her a large portion of her husband’s spare time and company.

Elizabeth has the honour of being included along with the Lucases in the Collins summons, twice a week, to relieve the dulness of Lady Catherine de Bourgh’s family party at Rosings, and of being patronised and dictated to by Lady Catherine, a domineering, self-sufficient woman, who tells Mr. Collins how to manage his parish, Mrs. Collins how to keep her house and rear her poultry, Elizabeth how to practise her music, and Maria Lucas how to pack her trunk.

With the exception of Charlotte and Elizabeth, the recipients of these favours are overwhelmed, and awed into the humblest gratitude and obedience. Charlotte looks over Lady Catherine’s foibles, because they belong “to a superior woman and kind neighbour,”

exactly as the judicious young matron takes care to value at the highest rate all the advantages of her position, and to ignore as far as possible its drawbacks, thus contriving to remain tolerably satisfied with her lot.

Elizabeth, entirely undazzled by the assumption and splendour which prevail at Rosings, amuses herself with detecting a resemblance between Mr. Darcy and his aunt, and feels satisfied that Lady Catherine's only child, Miss de Bourgh, a sickly, supercilious girl, with a large fortune, who is designed for her cousin, will make him a fit wife.

Darcy and Colonel Fitzwilliam, another nephew of Lady Catherine's, arrive on a visit at Rosings, while Elizabeth and Maria Lucas are still staying at Hunsford Vicarage, which is only divided by the lane and the park palings from the great house.

Naturally, the two young men, whatever the aristocratic trammels under which they labour, are attracted daily to the more congenial society of the parsonage. For that matter, Colonel Fitzwilliam, though the younger son of an earl, is agreeable and unassuming, likely to make himself happy among any fairly well-born and well-educated young people, and especially with a pretty, witty young girl like Elizabeth Bennet.

But even Darcy, under stress of circumstances, thaws considerably. He pays his homage unmistakably in the same quarter as that which attracts his cousin, and betrays considerable annoyance and shame when his aunt's impertinence is directed at Elizabeth.

With regard to the great lady, she is so firmly convinced of her own supreme deserts and those of her daughter, that she does not so much as see the strong inclination to defection on the part of the gentlemen. Elizabeth Bennet likes Colonel Fitzwilliam, and is rather surprised to find that he is on cordial cousinly terms with Darcy. It does not mollify her in the least to discover that the latter seeks to renew their acquaintance on a more intimate footing, and perplexes Mrs. Collins by the extent of his civilities to the parsonage.

Elizabeth avoids the man she detests as much as she can; and when she has the ill luck to encounter him in the pretty country walks, and the strolls in Rosings Park, of which she is the only lady in the house to avail herself, she expressly mentions to him, without a grain of coquetry, her favourite path, that no untoward accident may occur again. She attributes the circumstance that she still meets Mr. Darcy to his letting himself come in the way, as a resource for sheer idleness, if not with the express purpose of spoiling her walk. He turns and walks with her without getting any encouragement, asks odd questions as to her opinion of Mr. and Mrs. Collins' happiness, and—most unaccountable eccentricity of all—seems to imply, when they are talking of the rooms at Rosings, that the next time he and she are in Kent, she too will be staying at the great house, instead of at the parsonage. Elizabeth wonders, is momentarily put out, and thinks no more of it.

In a conversation between Elizabeth and Colonel Fitzwilliam, just before the two gentlemen are to take their departure, after the Colonel has mentioned that they would have been gone long ago, if Darcy had not, again and again, put off their leaving Rosings, and Elizabeth has hinted that Mr. Darcy has no objection to direct his friends' movements, the talk turns on Darcy's well-known influence over his great friend Bingley. Fitzwilliam, in his ignorance, refers to a service which Darcy has done this friend, and of which the benefactor has spoken to his cousin, without, however, mentioning names. Darcy has congratulated himself on having been able to rescue a friend from the misfortune of contracting a very undesirable marriage.

Elizabeth, understanding the allusion, feels her blood boil at what she regards as a heartless boast thus unconsciously repeated to one interested in the transaction. After she has parted from her innocent informant, she occupies herself with re-reading Jane's last letters, and imagines she sees in them proofs of broken spirits and impaired tranquillity.

Elizabeth is herself so troubled that she pleads with reason a violent headache to excuse her from accompanying the Collins' and Maria Lucas to dine at Rosings. Elizabeth feels she cannot encounter Darcy with calmness, after this confirmation of the injury he has inflicted on her sister.

In the course of the evening Elizabeth Bennet is startled by a ring at the door-bell. To her utter amazement, Mr. Darcy walks in. He has left the party at Rosings, and he at once imputes his visit to a wish to hear that she is better.

Elizabeth answers with cold civility.

He rises and walks about the room, comes towards her in an agitated manner, and bursts forth "In vain have I struggled. It will not do. My feelings will not be repressed. You must allow me to tell you how ardently I admire and love you!"

Elizabeth's astonishment is beyond expression. She stares, colours, doubts, and is silent. "For once a young lady is incredulous on the subject of a proposal made to her."

Darcy treats her silence as sufficient encouragement, and proceeds to plead his cause—speaking well, like the able man he is.

But, unfortunately, there are other feelings than love to be described, and he is as eloquent on his pride—of which he has never learnt to be ashamed—on the contrary, he has always been proud of his pride—as on his tenderness. With great candour, but little tact, he expatiates on the obstacles his attachment has had to overcome, refers to her inferior position, and lets it be plainly seen he considers an alliance with her family in one sense a degradation.

In short, Mr. Darcy pays his addresses in a high and mighty fashion, which belonged as much to the privileges of the great "quality" of the period as to the man.

Little wonder that, though he urges with some justice the strength of a regard which has been proof

against such trials, and claims its due reward in her acceptance of his hand—speaking of apprehension and anxiety, but with his countenance expressing real security, so that it is evident he has no doubt of a favourable answer—a high-spirited girl like Elizabeth Bennet, who already looks upon herself as aggrieved by this man, her sister's worst enemy, should become exasperated into forgetting her first sense of the compliment of Darcy's affection, and pity for his inevitable disappointment.

With hardly more humility than he has displayed, she gives him his answer. She waives with disdain the usual expressions of obligation. She declares she cannot thank him. She has never desired his good opinion, and it is certain he has bestowed it most unwillingly. She is sorry to cause pain to any one. It has been most unconsciously done, however, and she hopes will be of short duration. The feelings which he has just told her have long prevented the acknowledgment of his regard, can have little difficulty in overcoming it after this explanation.

Mr. Darcy, who is leaning against the mantelpiece with his eyes fixed on her face, hears her with as much resentment as surprise or pain. In fact, it is with the white heat of anger, rather than the extremity of grief, that his complexion grows pale; and when he has put just enough force on himself to speak calmly, it is with imperiousness and not with despair—above all, without the most distant idea of stooping to implore her mercy—that he demands, “And this is all the reply which I am to have the honour of expecting? I might, perhaps, wish to be informed why, with so little endeavour at civility, I am thus rejected. But it is of small importance.”

Thus pressed and goaded, Elizabeth speaks her mind with passionate, youthful freedom as well as dignity and scorn. She accuses him of a design to offend and insult her, by choosing to tell her he likes her against his will, against his reason, even against his character. She

asks if he could think that, though her feelings had not decided against him, though they had been indifferent, even favourable, any consideration could ever induce her to marry a man who has destroyed the happiness of a beloved sister?

He is guilty of saying that he has been kinder to Bingley than to himself.

She retorts that she has long ago known his character from Mr. Wickham, and dares him to contradict what she has heard.

His hasty exclamation, "You take an eager interest in that gentleman's concerns!" betrays that jealousy is the first emotion aroused by her reproach.

But when she goes on to protest against the injuries he has inflicted on his father's godson, in withholding from him what Darcy must have known to be his due, other feelings are awakened in her hearer.

"And this," he cries, as he walks with quick steps across the room, "is your opinion of me? This is the estimation in which you hold me? I thank you for explaining it so freely. My faults, according to this calculation, are heavy indeed."

But he is not so much hurt that pride and resentment are not to have the last word. He stops his indignant cry, to assert that perhaps his offences might have been overlooked if he had not wounded her pride by the honest confession of his scruples. Her bitter accusations might have been suppressed if he had flattered her with the belief that he was impelled by unqualified inclination. But he is not ashamed of the feelings he has related. They were natural and just. Could she expect him to rejoice in the inferiority of her connexions?

Here is the most masterful of incensed lovers. But he meets his match in the most resolute of indignant girls.

"You are mistaken, Mr. Darcy," Elizabeth says, with all the calmness she can summon to her aid, "if you suppose that the mode of your declaration affected

me in any other way than as it spared me the concern which I might have felt, in refusing you, had you behaved in a more gentlemanlike manner.”

She sees him start at this terrible home-thrust, and she is not inclined to be magnanimous in pursuing her advantage. “You could not have made me the offer of your hand in any possible way that would have tempted me to accept it,” she adds. Surely this is enough. But the obvious astonishment with which he hears her, the expression of mingled incredulity and mortification with which he looks at her, spurs on the intrepid, wrathful girl to explain further that from the very beginning—from the first moment of their acquaintance almost—his manners have impressed her with the fullest belief in his arrogance and conceit. She speaks out the disapprobation which has ended in invincible dislike, and winds up with the somewhat gratuitous statement that she had not known him a month before she felt that he was the last man in the world whom she could ever be prevailed on to marry.

Rash, foolish—if perfectly sincere—words can go no further.

“You have said quite enough, madam,” Darcy puts an end to the altercation. “I perfectly comprehend your feelings, and have now only to be ashamed of what my own have been. Forgive me for having taken up so much of your time, and accept my best wishes for your health and happiness.”

So the stormy interview terminates, and Elizabeth is left to recover from the tumult of her feelings, though it is too soon for her to be sorry for having spoken so many vehement words in her anger.

Of course, Elizabeth keeps an honourable silence on what has befallen her. She has no confidante save her own thoughts, and she is reduced next morning to walking out alone to indulge them in peace, when again she sees a gentleman in the distance. This time she retreats from him, but she hears Mr. Darcy’s voice repeat her name. She has no choice save to stop and face him.

He comes up, holds out a letter, and saying quietly and haughtily, "Will you do me the honour of reading that letter?" bows himself off.

With the strongest curiosity, though with no expectation of pleasure, Elizabeth opens the letter, and is still more surprised to find it contains two sheets (the old, spacious sheets) written quite through in a close hand, with the cover also full.

The letter is not a love-letter, or a letter of apology; it is simply a vindication of the writer's character from the charges which Elizabeth had impulsively brought against it.

In the first part, which deals with the accusation against Darcy for having deliberately separated Bingley and Jane, he begins by making the small atonement of emphatically declaring that he had acted under a mistaken impression. He has been persuaded that, while his friend was rapidly becoming attached to Miss Bennet, she, on her part, was still sufficiently indifferent to him to prevent her happiness being seriously implicated in the affair. In this light, Darcy has thought himself at liberty to take all lawful means to hinder the marriage for his friend's sake, while he himself was still successfully struggling with his admiration for Elizabeth.

In recapitulating the objections to the marriage, the writer sins afresh, and worse than ever where his reader's feelings are concerned. He writes some very plain and hard words of the Bennet family which, in the middle of his strong determination to clear himself, he must have known would wound Elizabeth to the quick. He says that the inferiority of her mother's origin, however much to be regretted, is nothing in comparison with that total want of propriety so frequently—almost so uniformly—betrayed by Mrs. Bennet herself, by Elizabeth's three younger sisters, and occasionally even by her father.

Apparently, Darcy has relented a little after writing these harsh words, for in the next sentence he does ask her shortly to pardon him. He protests it pains him to

offend her. He even goes a little out of his way, to bid her, in her concern for the defects of her relations, and her displeasure with him for unreservedly pointing them out, take comfort from the consideration that she and her elder sister have so conducted themselves as to escape any share of the censure liberally bestowed on the others. He says, with lurking tenderness, under the guise of stern justice, that the exemption is honourable to the sense and disposition both of Jane and Elizabeth.

In proceeding to dispose of her violent advocacy of Wickham's cause and consequent severe aspersions of his own character, Darcy treats the subject as more serious, and here the higher nature of the man comes in. In proportion to the greater injury done him, he grows calmer, more reasonable, almost magnanimous. With a manly self-restraint and absence of all invective, which are in themselves proofs of his honesty of purpose, he consents to make plain to her, at whatever sacrifices of his pride and reserve, how very different from what she supposes have been his relations with Wickham. He even puts himself to the pain of entrusting to her honour a portion of the story which involves another member of his family, the young sister to whom he is confessedly the best of brothers, in order to complete the exposure of the wholesale misrepresentation, the tangled web of truth and falsehood, with which Wickham has deceived her.

While young men at college together, Darcy knew how far Wickham fell short of the elder Darcy's good opinion, without attempting to deprive the lad of his patron's favour. In those days Wickham had shown himself as disinclined, as he was unfit, to take orders; and at the death of his godfather, who had only recommended him to the family living conditionally—on his proving suitable, and on the younger Darcy's approbation of the presentation—Wickham had announced his objections to the step proposed, and had accepted £3,000 as an equivalent. It was not till after he had

failed in studying for the bar, and when he had wasted the money he had received, that he had again applied to Darcy with cool effrontery, professing his readiness to comply with the necessary conditions, and claiming the presentation to the living.

On Darcy's refusal, Wickham had attempted to revenge himself, and at the same time to secure Georgiana Darcy's fortune of £30,000 by renewing his acquaintance with Darcy's sister, and making use of her childish affection for him, until he had sufficiently ingratiated himself with the inexperienced girl of fifteen, to induce her to believe herself in love, and to consent to an elopement with him. Georgiana was only saved from a miserable fate by the affection for the elder brother who had been like a second father to her, which caused her, at the last moment, to refuse to go any further in deceiving and defying him, and to confess to him her foolish intention.

Darcy ends his letter by referring Elizabeth Bennet for confirmation of his account, should she be inclined to question it, to his cousin, Colonel Fitzwilliam, who is acquainted with the entire particulars, and who can have no motive in misleading her.

Then with the revived regret and charity with which a man will say farewell to the woman he has loved—and loves still, in spite of her cruel treatment of him—he bids God bless her, before he signs himself Fitzwilliam Darcy.

Elizabeth reads eagerly, with a throng of conflicting emotions. She commences by being incredulous. "This could not be true," she says of his assertion that he has thought Jane free from any special partiality for Bingley, while she writhes under the cutting references to her other relations and their exhibition of themselves at the Netherfield ball.

Again she cries out with still more energy, "This must be false," when she comes to the temperate statement of Wickham's misconduct and absolute untrustworthiness.

But as she reads, and re-reads, and reflects on the contents of the letter, the girl's good sense, her own fairness and truthfulness come to her aid against the rooted prejudice which had so blinded her judgment—finding ample food as it did in the besetting sin of Darcy, which reflected itself in his unpopular and unconciliatory manner, in contrast with the superficially pleasant address, masking the unprincipled selfishness of Wickham.

Elizabeth is forced to see how completely she has been taken in, how little ground she has had to go upon in either case, save vanity piqued on the one hand and gratified on the other. She shrinks abashed before her own errors of observation and reasoning—she who has been so proud of her penetration and cleverness.

She hates to remember her zealous support of Wickham, of whom she had literally known nothing, except that he was handsome and agreeable, and from the stories he has told her himself with a frankness which, even if he had been perfectly sincere, would have been imprudent and indelicate in so recent an acquaintance.

She recoils from the recollection of her sharpness and uncalled-for taunts to Darcy, and is brought to admit that his warm, constant regard for her, in the teeth of her unconcealed dislike to him, has been no common compliment from such a man; though she must still think that he urged his suit in an improper and unamiable manner.

When Elizabeth returns to Longbourn, she is doubtful whether or not she ought to tell so much of what she has learned of Wickham's real character as to open the eyes of their common acquaintances; but hearing, to her immense relief, that the militia regiment stationed at Meryton is under orders to go into camp at Brighton, and that Wickham must leave the neighbourhood, in company with the rest of the officers, in the course of a fortnight, she resolves, with the approval of her sister Jane, who has been the astonished listener to all Elizabeth's adventures, to leave Wickham

the opportunity of redeeming the past, by refraining from the uncongenial task of exposing him to his associates.

The two younger Miss Bennets, in company with the more thoughtless girls of their immediate circle, are sunk in the depths of despair at the prospect of the loss of liveliness in their society, which the removal of the regiment involves. But Lydia, who has been loudest in her lamentations, is more than consoled, for the present, by an invitation from the wife of the colonel of the regiment, a newly-married woman, little older and hardly less empty-headed than Lydia herself, to accompany her on a visit to Brighton.

As Lydia's ideas of felicity are summed up in flirting noisily with six officers at once, Brighton and its camp appear like Paradise to her.

In some respects, Lydia Bennet and George Wickham are not unlike the fast heroine and lady-killing hero of many modern novels. It is edifying to contemplate the unqualified contempt and reprobation with which Jane Austen viewed the couple.

Elizabeth Bennet is so conscious of the risk and harm to Lydia, in allowing her to go to a town which combines all the disadvantages of a watering-place and regimental quarters with such slender guardianship as that of her friend, Mrs. Foster, that the elder sister feels bound to risk giving mortal offence to Lydia, and incurring the indignation of their mother, who is nearly as bent on her daughter's paying the undesirable visit, as is the forward, spoilt girl of sixteen on her own account. So Elizabeth goes to her father, and urges him to keep her youngest sister at home.

But Mr. Bennet will not be stirred up to exercise his authority. He is as convinced as anybody can be of the silliness and folly of Lydia, but, acting on his usual plan, he is more inclined to laugh at her than to try to restrain her. Lydia will never be easy till she has exposed herself at some public place, and she could never do it at less expense and inconvenience

to her family. They will have no peace at Longbourn if she does not go to Brighton. As the officers will find women better worth their notice there, let her relations hope Lydia may be taught her own insignificance. At any rate, she cannot grow many degrees worse, without authorising them in locking her up for the rest of her life.

III.

Elizabeth has a gratification in store for her, to which she has long looked forward, so simple and common a one in this generation, that it is refreshing to hear how much, even in anticipation, a trip to the Lakes or to Derbyshire has been to the untravelled girl, with her fresh, unjaded tastes. In the same way, it is touching to read in some of the last published letters of Charlotte Brontë how the gifted, hard-faring woman was disposed to think a week by the sea, which she had not seen before, in the company of a congenial friend, implied almost too much happiness for this world.

The Bennets have an uncle and aunt in London, in trade, like the rest of their mother's relations, inhabiting a house in the City region of Gracechurch Street, but who are in all other respects different from Mrs. Bennet and the Philips in Meryton. Mr. and Mrs. Gardiner are sensible, intelligent, amiable people, much esteemed by their elder nieces. The couple have promised to take Elizabeth with them on a summer tour of a month's duration to the Lakes; the idea cheers and consoles the girl under a hundred depressing and mortifying influences.

As it happens, Mr. Gardiner cannot go so far as the Lakes, and the expedition is limited to Derbyshire,

with its dales, towns, and great houses, its Peak, and its caverns. Elizabeth enjoys herself heartily, without an *arrière pensée*, till the excursion brings the party to the little town of Lambton, where Mrs. Gardiner had once lived for several years, and where she has still old acquaintances. Elizabeth is aware that Lambton is within a mile or two of Mr. Darcy's estate and house of Pemberley. She cannot be without some curiosity to see the fine place, of which, had she so chosen, she might have been by this time mistress. Therefore, when her companions, who are in complete ignorance of their niece's special interest in Pemberley, propose to drive to it, as one of the show-places of the neighbourhood, Elizabeth, having carefully ascertained that not one of the family is at home, willingly consents to accompany her uncle and aunt.

Jane Austen hardly ever describes scenery. The criticism on a recent tale, that there is not much of human nature but a great deal about the weather in the book, could never have been spoken of her stories. The fashion in the fiction of her day tended to two extremes—to the gorgeous ideal foreign landscape of Mrs. Radcliffe, or to the ignoring of inanimate nature in all save the barest accessories, practised by Mrs. Inchbald and Fanny Burney. Jane Austen preferred the latter style of treatment; her interest is not merely centred in her men and women, it is monopolised by them. As in the old tragic ballads, which were yet so far removed from her stories, there seems no time for elaborate analyses of earth, sea, and sky, with the moulding of these mute forces into subtle sympathy, or clashing discord with men's moods, a tendency which belongs to artificial and self-conscious art.

Yet we receive the impression that Jane Austen loved the country and country walks. Once and again she paints little landscape pictures which indicate her taste and feeling. As might have been expected in her generation, she shows her preference for rich, cultivated, smiling, or at most prettily picturesque, thoroughly

domestic scenery. Her description of Pemberley Park is one of her rare bits of landscape. She dwells with much approbation—not only on the large, handsome stone building (the age which revels in mellow brick, and puts Queen Anne, not to say Queen Elizabeth, houses, far before Georgian mansions, had not yet arrived), standing well on a rising ground—but also on the ridge of wooded hills which forms the background, and on the stream of some natural importance, and “swelled” into still greater, but without any artificial appearance, with banks which are neither formal nor falsely adorned, that constitutes the foreground. One has no difficulty in conjuring up the place—somewhat heavy, yet stately and tranquil, with its stretches of fine wood, its open vistas contrived for “prospects,” and its careful adaptation of the fall of the ground to “a valley narrowing into a glen,” according to the principles of the landscape gardening of the period.

Elizabeth is disinterestedly delighted. She feels that to be mistress of Pemberley might have been something. She is no less pleased with the house, and its lofty, well-proportioned rooms, each window commanding a charming view; the furniture suitable to the fortune of the owner, but neither gaudy nor needlessly fine, with less splendour but more real elegance than the furniture at Rosings. “And of this place,” thinks Elizabeth, with some pardonable hankering, “I might have been mistress. With these rooms I might have been familiarly acquainted. Instead of viewing them as a stranger, I might have rejoiced in them as my own, and welcomed to them as visitors my uncle and aunt. But, no—” a wholesome recollection stops the current of her thoughts in time—“I should not have been allowed to invite them.”

The housekeeper, an elderly, respectable-looking woman, much more civil and less fine than Elizabeth had expected, shows the visitors over the house. After Elizabeth has recovered from a momentary alarm, and made a mental note of thanksgiving that they have not

come a day later, on the servant's observing that she expects her master the next morning with a large party of friends, the girl is able to listen with a mixture of feelings, in which wonder and bewilderment are not the least, to the talk which goes on among the others as the family pictures are being looked at. The house-keeper, on finding by some words which drop from Mrs. Gardiner that Elizabeth is acquainted with her master, begins to speak of him with honest pride and warmth. How good a master and landlord he is! How affectionate a brother! How kind to the poor! Does the young lady not think him a very handsome gentleman?

"Very handsome," answers poor Elizabeth briefly.

One example of the praise thus freely bestowed strikes Elizabeth as of all others the most extraordinary. "I have never had a cross word from him in his life, and I have known him ever since he was four years old," declares the old servant. And yet, if there was one fault more than another which Elizabeth Bennet had been accustomed to ascribe unhesitatingly to the lordly bear, Darcy, it was a bad temper; but, according to this credible witness, the bear abroad must be a lamb at home.

As Elizabeth digests the reflections aroused by this evidence, and looks at a full-length portrait of the master of the house, in which the face wears such a smile as she had noticed sometimes on the lips of the living man when he looked at her, she feels a deeper sentiment of gratitude than she has yet experienced for the love which had been so strong, though there was little of the courtier in the lover.

The little party are consigned to the gardener, who is conducting them across the lawn to the river. Elizabeth has turned back to look again. Her uncle and aunt have stopped also, and are conjecturing the date of the house, when its owner comes suddenly forward from the road leading to the stables.

The two so much interested are within twenty yards

of each other, and cannot avoid an encounter. Their eyes meet; both grow crimson. He absolutely starts, and for a moment seems immovable with surprise, but shortly recovering himself, advances and speaks to Elizabeth with perfect civility, if not perfect composure.

Mr. and Mrs. Gardiner recognise Mr. Darcy from his resemblance to his picture and from the exclamation of the gardener. They stand a little aloof, while the new comer and their niece exchange greetings.

In the meantime Elizabeth is reduced to a state of extreme confusion and discomfort. She scarcely dares lift her eyes to her quondam lover's face. She cannot forget, and she knows he must recall with equal vividness, the circumstances under which they parted at Hunsford.

She is keenly alive to the impropriety, the indelicacy of his finding her at Pemberley. Why did she come? or why has he thus returned a day before he was expected? How strange her being there must appear to him! In what a disgraceful light may it not strike so vain a man! For Elizabeth still holds forlornly to the last rag of the mental and moral habiliments in which she clothed him. She clings to the conviction of his high opinion of himself and his deserts. But, in spite of herself, amidst all the jumble of sensations which his appearance has excited, none is more distinct or strikes her more forcibly, than the realisation that he is heaping coals of fire on her head, by behaving to the girl who had rejected him—well-nigh with contumely—with the greatest, most sedulous courtesy that a true gentleman could show on such a trying occasion. More than that, there is a complete alteration in his whole tone, which she cannot fail to observe, that might have been perceptible even to a stranger. He has overcome his old aversion to the small polite forms and genialities of social intercourse, along with his old stiffness and coldness. He puts himself to the trouble of inquiring for the very relations he stigmatised, as well as for herself. He asks when she has left home, and how long she

means to stay in Derbyshire. He is interested in her answers. He is animated and agreeable, in the middle of his evident agitation, for the first time since she has known him. His words only fail him when his last idea deserts him, and, after standing a moment silent, he recollects himself, and takes his leave.

Elizabeth is full of astonishment in her distress, and all the time she walks about the grounds, mechanically responding to their praises on the part of her companions, and hearing the gardener triumphantly announce that the park is ten miles round, she is puzzling out the riddle, asking herself what Mr. Darcy thinks of her; whether she is still dear to him, in defiance of everything? She cannot tell, not even from her own heart, if he has felt most pain or pleasure in seeing her again; but certainly he has not been at ease.

While the visitors are still wandering about, Elizabeth is again surprised by seeing Darcy at a little distance coming towards them. For a moment she thinks he will strike into another path, but when a turn of the road shows him still advancing, and preparing to greet them with all his newly-acquired cordiality, she determines to emulate him, and gets out the words "delightful," "charming," when it strikes her that praise of Pemberley from her may be misconstrued, and she colours and is silent.

Darcy asks if she will do him the honour of introducing her friends.

This is a stroke of civility which even yet Elizabeth did not expect. She cannot suppress a smile at his seeking the acquaintance of some of the very people against whom, viewed as her connections, his pride had revolted. "What will be his surprise," she thinks, with girlish glee in her reviving spirits, "when he knows who they are? He takes them now for people of fashion."

As she names the Gardiners' relationship to herself, she steals a mischievous glance at Darcy, to see how he bears it. She is not without a suspicion that he will decamp, as fast as he can, from such disgraceful companions.

On the contrary, though he is surprised, he bears the news with apparent fortitude, and, so far from going away, turns and walks with them, entering into conversation with Mr. Gardiner.

Elizabeth cannot but be pleased—cannot but triumph. It is consoling that Darcy should know she has some relations for whom there is no need to blush. She listens attentively to all that passes, and glories in every sentence of her uncle's which marks his intelligence, his taste, or his good manners.

Soon Elizabeth hears Mr. Darcy invite her uncle, who is fond of fishing, to fish in the stream while he is in the neighbourhood. Elizabeth says nothing, but it gratifies her exceedingly; the compliment must be all to herself. In place of continuing to torment herself with the reproach "Why has she been so foolish as to visit Pemberley?" she begins to ask more agreeable questions. "Why is he so altered? It cannot be for me? It cannot be for my sake his manners are thus softened? It is impossible he should still love me."

Elizabeth finds an opportunity, when Mrs. Gardiner has taken her husband's arm, and their niece has been forced to walk behind with Darcy, to let him know she had not expected to see him there, observing that his return must have been unexpected, since his housekeeper had said he would certainly not be back till to-morrow.

He tells her he had ridden on before his party, to arrange some business with his steward. His sister and the others—among whom are old acquaintances of hers, Mr. Bingley and his sisters—will follow early the following morning.

Elizabeth simply bows. Her thoughts fly back to the last occasion on which Mr. Bingley's name was mentioned between them, and if she may judge by his complexion, his mind is not very differently engaged.

But Mr. Darcy is still to give the crowning proof of his condonement of Elizabeth's offence, and his unshaken—if possible, increased—respect for her. He tells her there is one person in his party who particularly wishes

to be known to her. Will she allow him, or does he ask too much, to introduce his sister to her acquaintance during her stay in Derbyshire?

This flattering request from the proud, exclusive, great man of the neighbourhood, who is naturally still more exclusive for his young sister than for himself, is delicate homage indeed, such as Elizabeth is well qualified to appreciate. Any desire Miss Darcy has to know her must be the work of her brother, and, without looking further, it is very gratifying to have this strong testimony that his resentment has not made him think really ill of her.

Elizabeth hardly knows how she accedes to the petition, only it cannot have been very ungraciously. He wishes her to walk into the house, but she excuses herself, saying she is not tired, and the two stand together on the lawn talking indefatigably of Matlock and Dovedale, to avoid an awkward silence, till the Gardiners came up, when, after a renewed and pressing invitation to enter the house and take some refreshment, Mr. Darcy hands the ladies into the carriage.

Elizabeth has to listen to her uncle and aunt's remarks on the Squire of Pemberley, who, in spite of his formidable reputation for hauteur and reserve, has shown himself "perfectly well-behaved, polite, and unassuming." "I can now say with the housekeeper," ends Mrs. Gardiner, with a great deal more point than she is aware of, "that though some people may call him proud, I have seen nothing of it."

The probability of such a reformation of manners on Darcy's part remains an open question. Perhaps the sudden change in him is one of the most unlikely occurrences which happen in Jane Austen's life-like novels. But her readers must remember that Darcy was only eight-and-twenty years of age. He was a young man of high character and many fine qualities, though these had been warped by the false self-importance which was the result of the over-indulged, isolated, really narrow experience of the only son and heir of a great family.

confined largely to the circle of his own friends—at the utmost his dependents. And the influence brought to bear on Darcy, with such telling effect, was his strong attachment to the bright, true-hearted girl who told him his faults so plainly, yet who could not alienate him, partly because of the single-heartedness of her nature, partly because of the elements of nobility in his. Love and his mistress, acting together on good principles which had been suffered to lie dormant, were Darcy's teachers, and at twenty-eight such teachers are still powerful.

The gradual change of Elizabeth's feelings towards Darcy is wrought out with great skill.

Darcy is so eager to fulfil his intention with regard to Elizabeth Bennet and his sister, that on the very afternoon of Georgiana's arrival at home he drives her over to the inn in Lambton, where the Gardiners are staying.

Elizabeth has not been able to tell her uncle and aunt the compliment which she is to receive, and her confusion when the Pemberley livery is seen in the streets, together with the effort to be calm, impresses them with a new idea. There is no way to account for so marked attentions from such a quarter, unless by supposing a partiality for their niece—a supposition highly acceptable to the worthy uncle and aunt.

Elizabeth finds Miss Darcy, who is a ladylike girl, though not pretty, no alarming critic. She is shy instead of proud, but her shyness does not prevent her from being eager to like the friend her brother has presented to her.

A few minutes afterwards Bingley also "waits upon" Elizabeth, and is as friendly as of old. Her anger against him has vanished long ago. She is glad to see him again. She is pleased to fancy that he looks at her once or twice as if he were seeking to trace a resemblance between her and Jane. He is clearly on terms of simple friendship with Georgiana Darcy, for whom his sister, in complacently contemplating the possibility of a

double family match, has designed him. And Elizabeth believes she detects a regretful remembrance in the tone in which he refers to its having been a long time since he has seen her. She approves of the promptness and exactness of the mental calculation which follows: "It is above eight months; we have not met since the 20th of November, when we were all dancing together at Netherfield."

An invitation to dine at Pemberley follows. It is accepted with pleasure by the Gardiners, under the agreeable persuasion that Mr. Darcy is much better acquainted with Elizabeth than her friends had any idea of; in fact, that he is very much in love with her. Of the gentleman's feelings there can be no doubt; with regard to the sentiments of the lady—whom her relatives do not choose to embarrass by pressing for her confidence on the great conquest of which she has been far from boasting—there is still an interesting uncertainty.

Once more in agitating circumstances Elizabeth visits Pemberley, in paying the return call which she and her aunt make upon Miss Darcy prior to the dinner.

Miss Darcy is as hospitable as her shyness will allow. Darcy comes in and shows how anxious he is that Elizabeth and his sister should get better acquainted.

Miss Bingley and Mrs. Hurst are the marplots. They greet Elizabeth with no more than a curtsy, till, in the imprudence of anger at the master of the house's manner towards one of his guests, Caroline Bingley, who has been watching the pair jealously, calls out, "Pray, Miss Eliza, are not the ——shire militia removed from Meryton? They must be a great loss to your family."

The impertinence stings more than one of the listeners, in a way which the speaker has never contemplated. The friend to whom Miss Bingley professes herself to be devoted, Georgiana Darcy, is yet more distressed than Elizabeth at the association with Wickham which the mention of the militia regiment calls up, while Darcy actually neglects to watch the effect of the malicious speech on Elizabeth, in his sympathy with his young sister.

The callers are no sooner gone than Miss Bingley expatiates on how ill Eliza Bennet is looking. She has never in her life seen any one so much altered. Eliza Bennet has grown quite brown and coarse.

Mr. Darcy confesses he has seen no alteration in Miss Elizabeth Bennet, save her being tanned—no miraculous consequence of travelling in summer.

The infatuated woman is not to be silenced. . She pulls every feature of her successful rival's face to pieces. Elizabeth's face is too thin; her complexion has no brilliance; her nose lacks character; her eyes, which have been called fine, possess a sharp, shrewish look.

Darcy remains resolutely silent.

His assailant, unfortunately for herself, is determined he shall speak. "I remember when we first met in Hertfordshire," she continues in an airy strain, "how amazed we all were to find that she was a reputed beauty;* and I particularly recollect your saying one night after they had been dining at Netherfield, 'She a beauty! I should as soon call her mother a wit.' But afterwards she seemed to improve on you, and I believe you thought her rather pretty at one time."

"Yes," replies Darcy, who can contain himself no longer, "but that was only when I first knew her, for it is many months since I have considered her one of the handsomest women of my acquaintance."

Well done, Mr. Darcy! always fearless in announcing even a change of opinion, and now loyal to the absent, and true to your mistress's colours!

A terrible catastrophe is at hand.

That dinner-party at Pemberley never takes place. Elizabeth has been expecting a letter from Jane, and wondering at its non-arrival.

The delay is explained by two letters coming at one time, and the Gardiners set out to visit some of Mrs.

* When such gifts were strictly localised, the possession of them was better defined and more insisted upon. The "beauties" as well as the "fortunes" of a district were carefully classified and registered for the public good.

Gardiner's old friends, leaving Elizabeth at the inn to go leisurely through the home news. They are of an alarming, disastrous description. Lydia has eloped from Brighton with Wickham. The worst reports are in circulation with regard to his debts and his disreputable character. The family at Longbourn are in the utmost distress. Mr. Bennet has followed the fugitive pair to London, where Mr. Gardiner is implored to join him. Elizabeth is summoned home immediately.

As Elizabeth reads the letters in the height of dismay, passionately lamenting what is likely to be the miserable fate of her youngest sister, keenly sensible of the disgrace brought on the whole family, bitterly blaming herself for having abstained from letting her circle know what she had heard against Wickham when she was at Hunsford, Mr. Darcy is shown into the room.

"Oh, where is my uncle?" Elizabeth has just been crying to herself, and she has no further words for her visitor than a hurried "I beg your pardon, but I must leave you. I must find Mr. Gardiner this moment, on business that cannot be delayed; I have not an instant to lose."

Before he has time to think, he calls out, "What is the matter?" then begs to go himself, or to send a servant after Mr. and Mrs. Gardiner. He fears she is ill. He cannot leave her in such a state. With the utmost gentleness and consideration he urges her to let him help her, to suffer him to call her maid, to get her a glass of wine.

Elizabeth is forced to explain herself. There is nothing wrong with her health. She is only grieved by dreadful tidings from Longbourn, and at the words she bursts into tears. After having said so much it is idle to withhold the rest of the truth; indeed, the scandal must be over the whole country soon.

Elizabeth tells Darcy her youngest sister has eloped and is in the power of Mr. Wickham. She breaks off to reproach herself anew. She might have prevented it, if

she had but explained some part of what she had learnt to her family. But it is too late! too late! and Darcy might have said, "I told you so. The tables are turned with a vengeance." But he is only amazed, sorry, shocked. At last he scarcely seems to see her, as he walks up and down the room in earnest thought, his brow contracted, his air gloomy.

Elizabeth observes and understands. Her power is sinking in the balance; everything must sink under such an overwhelming evidence of family weakness. "And never had she so honestly felt that she could have loved him as now, when all love must be vain."

At last Darcy recollects himself, and with a voice which indicates compassion, but also restraint, excuses himself for intruding on her and staying so long. He would fain have helped her, but he will not torment her with vain wishes. He fears the unfortunate affair will prevent his sister's having the pleasure of seeing her at Pemberley that day.

Elizabeth hastily acquiesces, begs him to apologise to Miss Darcy, and adds a miserable entreaty that he will conceal the unhappy truth as long as possible—she knows it cannot be long.

He readily assures her of his secrecy, again expresses his sorrow for her distress, wishes it a happier ending than seems probable, leaves his compliments for her relations, and with only one serious parting look, goes.

As Darcy quits the room, Elizabeth feels how improbable it is that they two will ever see each other again on the happy terms which have marked their meetings in Derbyshire. But though the consideration is full of pain, the loyal girl has no time to spare for her own loss, in the calamity* which has befallen her family.

The Gardiners, returning, are ready with the utmost sympathy and regret. They promise every assistance in their power, including the immediate escort of Eliza-

* Elopements were not uncommon among the highly-coloured events of those days, but the consequences were apt to be even more disastrous than they are to foolish young people of this generation.

beth to Longbourn, after which Mr. Gardiner will join Mr. Bennet in London.

“But what is to be done about Pemberley?” exclaims Mrs. Gardiner. “John told us Mr. Darcy was here when you sent for us. Was it so?”

“Yes; and I told him we should not be able to keep our engagement; that is all settled,” cries Elizabeth, hurrying out of the room in a fever to set off.

“What, is all settled?” repeats the other; “and are they on such terms as for her to disclose the real truth? If I only knew how it is!”

IV.

In as short a time as fresh horses can convey them, the party are at Longbourn. Mr. Gardiner repairs to London, and induces Mr. Bennet, whose researches have been fruitless, to return home.

At last, after a period of wretched suspense, the news reaches Longbourn from Mr. Gardiner that he has discovered the couple. For Lydia's sake, little as she has deserved it, they are married from Mr. Gardiner's house. Certain stipulations have been made on Wickham's part, that the bride shall in time inherit her share of her mother's few thousand pounds; that her father shall allow Mrs. Wickham a hundred a year during his lifetime; that Wickham's debts shall be paid, and a commission procured for him in “the regulars.” Withal, little real happiness could be expected from such a marriage. Wickham has only turned to Lydia when he was repulsed in other quarters. His debts have been the compelling cause of his flight from Brighton. Her fondness for him is made up of giddiness and a foolish passion on which she has put no restraint.

But Mrs. Bennet is as elated at having a daughter married at last, and married at sixteen, as if the marriage had come about in a more honourable way.

Mr. Bennet views the matter in a different light. He is satisfied that his brother-in-law has kept back the amount of money furnished by him to Wickham, which Mr. Bennet must somehow, sooner or later, repay.

Her father has told Kitty, in the driest of sore-hearted jesting, that no officer is to be allowed to enter his house again, or even to pass through the village. Balls are to be absolutely prohibited, unless she stands up with one of her sisters; and she is never to stir out of the house till she can prove that she has spent ten minutes of every day in a rational manner.

Kitty has received those threats in a serious light, and begins to cry.

“Well, well,” cries the incorrigible humourist, “don’t make yourself unhappy. If you are a good girl for the next ten years, I will take you to a review at the end of them.”

At first, Mr. Bennet refuses to permit a visit from Mr. and Mrs. Wickham before he shall join his regiment in the North; but, on the earnest representations of his two elder daughters that to withhold the forgiving countenance of Lydia’s family from the young couple will be to lessen their slender chances of respectability, he allows the culprits to come for a short time to Longbourn, on their way to Newcastle.

The arrival of the Wickhams is in perfect keeping with what went before it, and is a splendid bit of serio-comedy. Jane blushes and Elizabeth blushes; but the cheeks of the two who cause their relations’ confusion suffer no increase of colour. Lydia is Lydia still, untamed, unabashed, wild, noisy, and fearless. Wickham is not at all more distressed than herself; but his manners have always been so pleasing that, had his audience not known his character, the smiling ease and grace with which he claims their relationship would have delighted them all. Elizabeth had not before

believed him quite equal to such assurance, but she resolves thenceforth to draw no limits to the impudence of an impudent man.

I hope I may be pardoned for drawing particular attention to the exquisite truthfulness of the couple's behaviour. The correct definition of it is specially valuable at a time when slightly-altered versions of such conduct are classed differently, and passed off on inexperienced and thoughtless readers, to the grave detriment of their standards of good morals and good taste.

Lydia, in her total want of proper feeling and modesty, cries out, "Oh, mamma, do people hereabouts know I am married to-day? I was afraid they might not; and we overtook William Goulding in his curricule to-day, so I was determined he should know it, and so I let down the side glass next to him and took off my glove, and let my hand just rest upon the window-frame, so that he might see the ring, and then I bowed and smiled like anything."

When the family party go in to dinner, Lydia, with eager parade, walks up to her mother's right hand, saying triumphantly to her eldest sister, "Ah, Jane, I take your place now, and you must go lower, because I am a married woman."

After dinner the bride retires to show her ring, and boast of being married, to the housekeeper and maid-servants.

When the ladies are all together again in the breakfast-parlour, which a hundred years ago did duty as a drawing-room, unless on state occasions, Mrs. Wickham patronises her whole family by giving them a general invitation to Newcastle, where she hopes there will be balls, and she will take care to find good partners for her sisters. After her father and mother go away, one or two of the girls may be left behind, when their *chaperon* expresses a sanguine hope that she will get husbands for them before the winter is over.

"Thank you for my share of the favour," says

Elizabeth, "but I do not particularly like your way of getting husbands."

"Sour grapes! spiteful thing!" we can imagine Lydia saying, hardly below her breath. Do we not see her before us, as large as life, in all her native colours, the pert, hoidenish, vulgar-minded girl—as destitute of delicacy as of dutifulness, or sweet unselfishness, or gentle affection—who has become, by some strange, sad chance, a favourite in the literature of the day? I appeal to my readers—Is she not still the same, though the fashion of her dress, or the manner in which she wears her hair, and a few of her phrases, may be altered, and though—alas! for the lower tone of much modern English fiction—she is now held up to approbation instead of reprobation.

In the course of her shameless boasting about her marriage, Lydia lets out before her sisters that Mr. Darcy was present.

"Mr. Darcy!" exclaims Elizabeth, in utter bewilderment.

"Oh! yes, he was to come there with Wickham, you know. But, gracious me, I quite forgot! I ought not to have said a word about it. I promised them so faithfully. What will Wickham say? It was to be such a secret."

"If it was to be such a secret," says the honourable Jane, "say not another word on the subject. You may depend upon my seeking no farther."

"Oh! certainly," says Elizabeth, though burning with curiosity, "we will ask you no questions."

"Thank you," answers Lydia coolly, "for if you did I should certainly tell you all, and then Wickham would be angry."

Elizabeth has to run away from the temptation. She has one resource, however; she can write and ask a private explanation from her kind aunt.

Elizabeth learns the whole truth, though Mrs. Gardiner does not conceal her surprise that the information is required in such a quarter. After Darcy's

parting from Elizabeth in Derbyshire, he had gone immediately to London—and, in fact, done everything. It was he who, through his previous acquaintance with Wickham's habits and associates, had discovered the couple, and brought them to Mr. Gardiner's knowledge. It was Darcy who had conducted all the negotiations—in fine, it was Darcy who had insisted on paying the necessary money—a thousand pounds for Wickham's debts; another thousand to be settled, in addition to her own, on Lydia; and the purchase-money for her husband's commission. The reason which Darcy had urged for being allowed to take the lead in the matter, and to furnish the money, was that it had been through his own unjustifiable reserve, and want of consideration for others, that Wickham's character had not been known, so that he had been received and noticed in respectable society.

But Mr. Gardiner would not have yielded up his right of making some sacrifice for his niece—or, rather, for her family—had he not been persuaded that Mr. Darcy of Pemberley had even a nearer interest in the affair, by being either actually engaged, or on the point of being engaged, to Lydia Bennet's sister Elizabeth. Indeed, Mrs. Gardiner is still so convinced of the truth of the impression, and of the happy prospects of one of her favourite nieces, in a marriage with a man of much worth, as well as of great social consideration, who only wants a little more liveliness—which a judicious choice of a wife may supply—that, in closing her letter, she gaily begs Elizabeth not to punish the writer's presumption by excluding her from Pemberley, since she can never be quite happy till she has been all round the park—an expedition for which a low phaeton, with a nice pair of ponies, would be the very thing.

Elizabeth is greatly moved by the efforts and the sacrifices of feeling—still more than of money—which Darcy has made on Lydia's behalf. It could not have been for Lydia alone. But when Elizabeth asks herself, Were the Gardiners right in arguing it was for her—Eliza-

beth's—sake? she is met by the humbling reflection that the assistance he has rendered must, and ought to be, the last tribute paid by Darcy to a loyal, disinterested regard, which has proved in every way unfortunate. The idea of the proud, sensitive master of Pemberley voluntarily seeking to become the brother-in-law of Wickham, the son of his father's steward—the man who has so wronged him and his, who has outraged Darcy's every principle and instinct—the man whom of all others Darcy most abhors, and has reason to abhor—is not to be thought of for an instant. Yet Elizabeth is half-pleased, in the middle of her pain, to see how confidently her uncle and aunt have reckoned on her marriage with Darcy.

Mrs. Bennet is consoled for the Wickhams' departure by the news, which quickly circulates in Meryton, that Mr. Bingley is coming down to Netherfield for the shooting. At once she resumes all her former projects for her eldest daughter, and poor Jane, in addition to the conflict in her own heart, has to submit to her mother's pointedly looking at her, smiling at her, or shaking her head over her, every time the tenant of Netherfield's name happens to be mentioned—which, for the present, is incessantly.

The old argument as to Mr. Bennet's calling immediately at Netherfield is renewed.

Mr. Bennet stoutly refuses. "No, no; you forced me into visiting him last year, and promised me if I went to see him he should marry one of my daughters. But it ended in nothing, and I will not be sent on a fool's errand again."

In the middle of the doubts as to what brings Bingley back, and whether he comes with or without his friend's gracious permission, Elizabeth thinks in her own merry way, "It is hard that this poor man cannot come to a house which he has legally hired without rousing all this speculation. I will leave him to himself."

On the first morning after Bingley's return into Hertfordshire, Mrs. Bennet has the joy of seeing him,

from her dressing-room window, riding up the paddock to Longbourn House. She calls her daughters to share her exultation. Jane sits still. Elizabeth, to satisfy her mother, goes to the window; she looks, she sees Mr. Darcy with his friend, and sits down again by her sister.

"There is a gentleman with him, mamma," says the unconscious Kitty, and then adds the next moment, "La! it looks just like that man who used to be with him before, Mr. What's-his-name? That tall, proud man."

"Good gracious! Mr. Darcy; and so it does, I vow. Well, any friend of Mr. Bingley will always be welcome here, to be sure; but else I must say that I hate the very sight of him."

These are some of the many expressions of dislike to Darcy and misconception of his character, for which Elizabeth has partly herself to thank, since she had helped largely to originate them. She has now to listen to them in silence, while she alone is aware of the benefits he has conferred on the whole family, and that he has saved her mother's favourite daughter from destruction.

Elizabeth had meant to watch closely Jane's first interview with Bingley on his return; but the attention of the young watcher is sadly distracted by her own position and that of Darcy, while she has nearly as many doubts of Darcy's intentions as of Bingley's. Darcy's coming there at all might have been supposed to have only one significance, but Elizabeth will not be sure.

As it happens, the double awkwardness of the situation is so great that all those most concerned in it labour under the greatest constraint—a constraint which, unhappily, is only too likely to be misconstrued.

Jane is pale and sedate.

Bingley is looking embarrassed as well as pleased.

Darcy strikes Elizabeth as more like what he used to be in Hertfordshire than as he had seemed in the pleasant days in Derbyshire.

Of Elizabeth's own unwonted gravity, naturally she can have no just conception.

Matters are made worse by Mrs. Bennet, whose fulsome civility to Bingley, on the one hand, contrasted as it is with her cold politeness to Darcy, on the other, fill both her elder daughters with distress and mortification; though it is only Elizabeth who suffers agonies of shame from Mrs. Bennet's most *mal à propos* dwelling on her youngest daughter's marriage, and her hit at Darcy when she reflects, in reference to Wickham, "Thank Heaven! he has some friends, though, perhaps, not so many as he deserves."

In the vehemence of youth, Elizabeth Bennet is persuaded that years of happiness—supposing they should ever come—could not make Jane and her amends for moments of such painful confusion. The first wish of her heart, Elizabeth declares to herself, is never more to be in the company of either of the gentlemen again. "Let me never see either one or the other again."

Yet Jane Austen remarks with quiet fun, in the very next sentence, the misery for which years of happiness were to offer no compensation received material relief when Elizabeth was able to observe how speedily Bingley's admiration for her sister was reviving in her presence. No doubt, also, Elizabeth derived some pleasure from the fact that both visitors engaged themselves to dine at Longbourn, on Mrs. Bennet's eager invitation.

"Mrs. Bennet had been strongly inclined to ask them to stay and dine that day, but though she always kept a good table she did not think anything less than two courses* could be good enough for a man on whom she had such anxious designs, or satisfy the appetite and pride of one who had £10,000 a year."

After the visitors are gone, Elizabeth asks herself

* Would anything less than two courses be now reckoned "a good table" for a country gentleman's family? Can we say the growing reckless luxury of these expensive times is well for ourselves and well for our fellow-citizens?

again, "If he came only to be silent, grave, and indifferent, why did he come at all?"

The dinner brings no satisfaction and enlightenment where Elizabeth's private affairs are concerned. Bingley, no doubt, is renewing his attentions to Jane beyond the possibility of mistake, so that Mrs. Bennet may be almost excused for fully expecting him to come and propose next day; though the sensible and amiable Jane still nervously assures herself and her sister Elizabeth that any apparent partiality to her only proceeds from Bingley's pleasing manners; and that, as for herself, she has become most desirably and comfortably indifferent with regard to his sentiments. But Darcy at the dinner-table is entirely separated from Elizabeth, and seated at the right hand of Mrs. Bennet, with whom he only exchanges an occasional formal word. In the drawing-room he does show an inclination to stand by Elizabeth, at the table where she and Jane are making tea and coffee, in the old, pretty, genial fashion; but the mere accident of the ladies of the party gathering about the table, and of a girl moving closer to Elizabeth with the stage whisper, "The men shan't come and part us, I am determined; we want none of them, do we?" is sufficient to cause him to walk away. His tongue may have been tied, and yet his eyes might have spoken; but as far as Elizabeth could discern he looked as much and as earnestly at Jane as at herself, both on this occasion and on that of his call. It is all a tormenting puzzle.

V.

Bingley calls again without his friend, announcing that Darcy has gone to London, but will return to Netherfield in ten days. From this date Bingley's wooing thrives apace. He makes daily engagements to shoot, or dine, or sup at Longbourn.

Mrs. Bennet practises the most transparent manœuvres to leave him alone with Jane, so that he may have the opportunity of saying "Barkis is willin'," or some equivalent phrase, since Barkis had not yet made his model proposal. For a short space Jane and Elizabeth defeat these arrangements.

At last, one evening when Elizabeth has gone out of the room to write a letter, believing that all the others, including Bingley, are safely seated at cards, the indefatigable matchmaker contrives to dissolve the party, sends Mary to her piano, and carries away Kitty to sit with her mother in her dressing-room, while Mr. Bennet is, as usual, ensconced in his library. Elizabeth, returning to the drawing-room, where she expects to find the family, discovers that her mother has been too ingenious for her. On opening the door she perceives her sister and Bingley standing together over the hearth, as if engaged in earnest conversation, and had this led to no suspicion, the faces of both, as they hastily turn and move away from each other, would have told all. There is a momentary awkwardness, till Bingley leaves the room to seek Mr. Bennet, when Jane is ready to proclaim herself the happiest girl in the world.

Elizabeth smiles at the rapidity and ease with which an affair that has cost them so much suspense and anxiety is finally settled. "And this," she says to herself, "is the end of all his friend's anxious circumspection, of all his sister's falsehood and contrivance,—the happiest, wisest, most reasonable end."

If Jane Bennet is the happiest girl, Mrs. Bennet is the happiest woman, according to her ideas of happiness. Lydia and Wickham are superseded; Jane is promoted, beyond comparison, her mother's favourite child.

Meryton soon hears the tale, and after having, only a few weeks before, when Lydia ran away, pronounced the Bennet household marked out for misfortune, now declares them the luckiest family in the kingdom.

One morning, shortly after Jane's engagement, a chaise and four drives up to Longbourn House. The

equipage and liveries are not familiar. The horses are "post." It is too early for visitors.

Amidst the speculation thus aroused, Jane and Bingley retreat into the shrubbery, leaving Mrs. Bennet, Elizabeth, and Kitty to receive the strangers, whoever they may be.

In a few minutes Lady Catherine de Bourgh is shown into the room. With the same arrogant ill-breeding which had distinguished the great lady's behaviour at home, she now conducts herself in another person's house, merely bowing to Elizabeth—the only member of the family with whom she has any previous acquaintance—sitting down, and in return for Mrs. Bennet's fluttered attentions, putting her through a series of impertinent questions, and finding fault with the park and the sitting-room.

Elizabeth is at a loss to account for the unsolicited favour of her ladyship's company, unless, indeed, she comes with a message from Mrs. Collins, but none is given.

At last Lady Catherine proposes that Elizabeth should take a turn with her in the wilderness, to which the girl accompanies her visitor, followed by an anxious direction from her mother to show her ladyship the different walks and the hermitage. As the couple go out, Lady Catherine opens the doors of the dining-parlour and drawing-room, and after a short survey, allows that they are "decent-looking rooms."

The carriage stands at the door with Lady Catherine's waiting-woman in it, announcing that Lady Catherine is on a journey taken with a set purpose.

Elizabeth leaves her companion, who is more than usually insolent and disagreeable, to begin the conversation, which she is not slow to do. "You can be at no loss, Miss Bennet, to understand the reason of my journey hither: your own heart, your own conscience, must tell you why I come."

Elizabeth professes her unaffected astonishment and entire ignorance.

“Miss Bennet,” says her ladyship angrily, “you ought to know that I am not to be trifled with.” Then, with a little preamble on the sincerity and frankness of her own character, she informs Elizabeth that a report of a most alarming nature had reached her two days before. “I was told,” says Lady Catherine, “that not only your sister was on the point of being most advantageously married, but that *you*—that Miss Elizabeth Bennet—would in all likelihood be soon afterwards united to my nephew, my own nephew, Mr. Darcy. Though I know it must be a scandalous falsehood, though I would not injure him so much as to suppose the truth of it possible, I instantly resolved on setting off for this place, that I might make my sentiments known to you.”

Filled with resentment as Elizabeth is, she remains mistress of the situation. “If you believe it impossible to be true,” says the high-spirited, quick-witted girl, “I wonder you took the trouble of coming so far. What could your ladyship propose by it?”

“At once to insist on having such a report universally contradicted.”

“Your coming to Longbourn to see me and my family,” says Elizabeth, with cool shrewdness, “will be rather a confirmation of it, if indeed, such a report is in existence.”

“If! Do you then pretend to be ignorant of it? Has it not been industriously circulated by yourselves? Do you not know that such a report is spread abroad?”

But Elizabeth is a match for her absurd inquisitor. The girl is neither to be insulted nor browbeaten into giving Lady Catherine such satisfaction as she has not the smallest right to require, or into submitting to her tyranny.

In vain Lady Catherine presses her as to the report and its origin; Elizabeth will neither confess nor deny the implication.

“This is not to be borne!” exclaims her ladyship.

“Miss Bennet, I insist on being satisfied. Has he, has my nephew, made you an offer of marriage?”

“Your ladyship has declared it to be impossible,” replies Elizabeth, with demure imperturbability.

“It ought to be so,” her ladyship protests, hotly; but then—as she hints, broadly—Elizabeth’s arts and allurements may have made the young man, in a moment of infatuation, forget what is due to himself and his family. She may have drawn him in.

“If I have, I shall be the last person to confess it,” Elizabeth answers.

Lady Catherine brings forward another imperative reason why such a proceeding can never take place: Mr. Darcy is engaged to her daughter.

“If he is so,” says the unshaken Elizabeth, “you can have no reason to suppose he will make an offer to me.”

Lady Catherine is forced to hesitate, and to condescend to an explanation. The engagement is a family arrangement, based on perfect suitability of rank, fortune, and character. It had been planned by the two mothers, when the cousins were still children in their cradles. Can Elizabeth, a young woman of inferior birth, and of no importance in the world, be so lost to every feeling of propriety and delicacy as to disregard the wishes of Mr. Darcy’s friends, and presume to alter the destiny which, from his earliest years, has united him with his cousin?

Yes; Elizabeth is intrepid enough to do it, and to tell the domineering woman that if there were no other objection to her—Elizabeth’s—marrying Lady Catherine’s nephew, she would certainly not be kept from it by knowing that his mother and aunt had wished him to marry Miss de Bourgh.

It is useless for Lady Catherine to threaten the penalties which the outraged family will inflict, ending in that direst indignity of all, that Elizabeth’s name will never be mentioned by any one of them; Elizabeth assures the speaker, almost airily, that though these

may be heavy misfortunes, the wife of Mr. Darcy must have such extraordinary sources of happiness, that upon the whole she could have no cause to complain.

No wonder the incensed great lady is reduced to the somewhat undignified alternative of calling Elizabeth names—"obstinate, headstrong girl;" to telling her she is ashamed of her; to sitting down and crying—well-nigh piteously, waxing childish and maudlin, like many another baulked, irrational tyrant—that she will carry out her purpose; she has not been used to any person's whims; she has not been in the habit of brooking disappointment; and it is not to be endured that her nephew and daughter are to be divided by the upstart pretensions of a young woman who, if she were sensible of her own good, would not wish to quit the sphere in which she had been brought up.

Elizabeth ventures to suggest that she is a gentleman's daughter.

"True," grants Lady Catherine; only to add, "but who was your mother? who are your uncles and aunts?"

"Whatever my connexions may be, if your nephew does not object to them, they can be nothing to you," says Elizabeth. She could not have been without a tingling recollection that he had objected to them pretty strongly, though she had just been marvelling how she could ever have imagined a resemblance between him and his aunt—the fact being that Lady Catherine presents a striking caricature of Darcy's original defects, without any of his redeeming virtues.

"Tell me, once for all, are you engaged to him?" demands Lady Catherine.

Though Elizabeth has no cause to oblige Lady Catherine by giving a reply, her own candour and self-respect compel her to answer, "I am not."

Lady Catherine shows herself pleased. "And will you promise me never to enter into such an engagement?" She pursues her advantage with determination. "I will make no promises of the kind," Elizabeth refuses

point-blank, and Lady Catherine's short-lived satisfaction is dashed to the ground. She resumes her reproaches. She is shocked. At last she is guilty of the meanness and cruelty of taunting Elizabeth with her sister Lydia's misconduct, ending by crying, "And is such a girl to be my nephew's sister? Is her husband—the son of his father's late steward—to be his brother? Heaven and earth, of what are you thinking? Are the shades of Pemberley to be thus polluted?"

The extravagant theatrical declamation of her ladyship might have provoked a smile from Elizabeth, but she has already borne too much, and she winces under the last ungenerous stab. "You can have nothing further to say to me," she exclaims, in her wounded feeling, with a simple dignity that contrasts well with the inflated pretensions of the other. "You have insulted me in every possible method; I must beg to return to the house."

Lady Catherine is not to be taught a lesson: she has long outlived such a possibility. The thick skin of her arrogance and conceit is impenetrable. She assails Elizabeth with fresh abuse and importunity.

"Lady Catherine, I have nothing further to say," Elizabeth contents herself with repeating. "You know my sentiments."

Lady Catherine talks on till the carriage is reached, when she finishes her prolonged attack very characteristically. "I take no leave of you, Miss Bennet; I send no compliments to your mother; you deserve no such attention. I am most seriously displeased."

The interview between Lady Catherine and Elizabeth, like the scene in which Mr. Collins proposes to the heroine, is a triumph of art. It is the perfection of true comedy, as opposed to the coarse farce which frequently stands for it, not only in its wonderful exhibition of Lady Catherine's densely stupid egotism and self-importance, but in what is so successfully opposed to them in Elizabeth Bennet's strong common sense, racy mother wit, and sterling truth to her lover and

to herself. Where a weak woman might have been cowed—at least, into a show of yielding for the time—or a foolishly sentimental girl might have been betrayed by the false glamour of unnecessary and uncalled-for self-sacrifice, Elizabeth stands firm, and comes out triumphantly. The whole passage, in its genius and wisdom, is a protest against the bathos of mock heroism, which is occasionally in danger of entrapping unwary actors in the drama of life. It is still more apt to mislead the artists who picture life, and mistake soft, even silly submission for unselfish resignation, and self-martyrdom for true martyrdom.

Elizabeth Bennet is dutiful in all the relations of life; she is even scrupulous as to its proprieties; but she is not a puppet in the hands of a Lady Catherine.

There is a curiously parallel scene drawn by one of Jane Austen's favourite authors—Fanny Burney, in her novel of "Cecilia"—where the heroine is driven by nearly similar arguments—employed, however, by the mother, and not merely the aunt of the hero, who has also been a true friend, to whom Cecilia was deeply indebted—to give up the lover to whom she is doubly bound. In spite of these differences in the situation, which are in Fanny Burney's favour, the opposite results of the two chapters go far to prove the immense superiority of Jane Austen as a writer.

Elizabeth has undergone the ordeal without blenching; but the reaction is to come. No doubt Lady Catherine will see her nephew in passing through London—how far may not her prejudiced version of what has passed between her and Elizabeth, with a vigorous personal appeal to Darcy, sway him as he still halts between two opinions? It is said that a woman who hesitates is lost—on the other side of the question; but the same saying does not hold good of a man. Lady Catherine is Darcy's aunt; he must view her in another light from that in which Elizabeth regards her. It is natural to suppose she has some influence over him, while Elizabeth is only too well aware how much

weight he once put on some of his kinswoman's violent objections.

Elizabeth makes up her mind that if Darcy does not return to Netherfield at the appointed date, she will know what to think.

In the meantime Elizabeth is summoned by her father to hear a letter from Mr. Collins read. In the tallest of tall language the writer solemnly congratulates the family on the brilliant prospects of his cousin Jane. Then, after referring to what is even the surpassing splendour of the alliance said to be within his cousin Elizabeth's reach, Mr. Collins servilely and with nervous timidity states the unconquerable opposition of his revered patroness, and implores Elizabeth not to provoke Lady Catherine's anger.

Mr. Bennet regards the report to which Mr. Collins has alluded, as the most preposterous mistake, and calls upon Elizabeth to laugh at it, as the best joke out. "Now, Lizzy, I think I have surprised you. Mr. Darcy, who never looks at any woman but to see a blemish, and who probably never looked at you in his life!"

Mr. Bennet is rather provoked because his daughter does not enjoy the absurdity of the idea as he had expected. "You are not going to be missish, I hope," he says reproachfully, "and pretend to be affronted by an idle report."

Poor Elizabeth! such incredulity is hard at this moment.

But Darcy returns punctually, and comes over to Longbourn with his friend; and in a walk undertaken by several of the young people, in which Elizabeth is Darcy's companion, she musters courage to thank him as the only member of the family who knows how much they owe him for what he has done for her sister.

Darcy is surprised, but perhaps not sorry to have such an opening given to a shy man. "If you will thank me," he says, "let it be for yourself alone. That the wish of giving happiness to you might add force to the other inducements which led me on I shall not attempt

to deny ; but your family owe me nothing, much as I respect them ; I believe I thought only of you."

Elizabeth is too embarrassed to say a word.

After a short pause her companion adds, " You are too generous to trifle with me. If your feelings are still what they were last April, tell me so at once. *My* affections and wishes are unchanged, but one word from you will silence me on the subject for ever."

Elizabeth, feeling all the more than common awkwardness and anxiety of his situation, now forces herself to speak, and immediately, though not very fluently, gives him to understand that her sentiments have undergone so material a change since the period to which he has alluded, as to make her receive with gratitude and pleasure his present assurances.

The happiness which this reply produces is such as Darcy had probably never felt before, and he expresses himself on the occasion as sensibly and as warmly as a man violently in love could be supposed to do. Had Elizabeth been able to encounter his eye, she might have seen how well the expression of heartfelt delight diffused over his face became him ; but though she cannot look she can listen, and he speaks of feelings which, in proving of what importance she is to him, make his affection every moment more valuable.

Various happy explanations follow. Among others he tells her Lady Catherine did visit him and relate the substance of her conversation with Elizabeth, dwelling on every expression of the latter which, in her ladyship's opinion, denoted Elizabeth's perverseness and assurance. But, unfortunately for his noble aunt, the effect of the communication proved the reverse of what she had intended. " It taught me to hope," he says, " as I had scarcely ever allowed myself to hope before. I knew enough of your disposition to be certain that had you been absolutely, irrevocably decided against me, you would have acknowledged it to Lady Catherine frankly and openly."

Elizabeth colours and laughs as she replies, " Yes,

you know enough of my frankness to believe me capable of that; after abusing you so abominably to your face, I could have no scruple in abusing you to all your relations."

"What did you say to me that I did not deserve?" protests the ardent, magnanimous lover, and goes on to farther penitent and grateful confessions.

In reference to the engagement between Bingley and Jane, with which Darcy declares himself delighted, "I must ask whether you were surprised," says Elizabeth.

"Not at all. When I went away I felt it would soon happen."

"That is to say, you had given your permission. I guessed as much." Elizabeth rallies the speaker gaily.

Though he exclaims at the word, she finds that it had been pretty much the case.

On the evening before his last visit to London, Darcy had honestly told his friend of his own attachment and proposal to Elizabeth Bennet, which rendered his former interference between Bingley and Jane Bennet "simply impertinent." The speaker had also courageously acknowledged that he believed from his observation of the latter he had been mistaken in his impression of Jane's indifference.

"Your assurance," says Elizabeth, with half-smothered fun, "I suppose carried immediate conviction to him?"

"It did," replies Darcy, in perfect good faith. "Bingley is most unaffectedly modest. His diffidence had prevented his depending on his own judgment in so anxious a case; but his reliance on mine made everything easy."

Elizabeth longs to observe that Mr. Bingley has been a most delightful friend—so easily guided that his worth is invaluable; but she checks herself. She remembers that he has yet to learn to be laughed at, and it is rather too early to begin.

Here is one of Jane Austen's characteristic touches.

Elizabeth, in the middle of her love and admiration for Darcy, sees, as such a woman could not fail to do, his weak points, and is not only tempted to laugh at him, but with a grand faith in his sense and love, and true to the character which had won his regard, she contemplates subjecting him in time to the wholesome discipline of her kindly laughter. And she lives to put her purpose into execution, for we are told Darcy's young sister, in her delight in the sister he has given her, is forced to wonder at the liberties Elizabeth takes with her husband. For Georgiana Darcy had to learn that a wise man will bear and relish from his wife what would be out of place and unwelcome from the sister fifteen years his junior.

Surely any man worthy of his salt would prefer to be so dealt with by the woman who in her heart of hearts dearly loves and heartily honours and obeys him, rather than receive the mawkish and fulsome—even when it is free from deliberate falsehood—flattery and submission, not of a friend and mate, but of a toy and slave.

Elizabeth, in her happiness, has still to suffer for the violent, unreasonable prejudice, so freely expressed, which had marked the commencement of her intercourse with Darcy. She knows what she has to expect when even Jane, who, through Bingley, understands something of Darcy's really fine nature, and who is besides prepossessed in his favour by what she imagines his hopeless passion for Elizabeth, yet meets her sister's news with something like stony incredulity. "You are joking. This cannot be! Engaged to Mr. Darcy! No, no; you shall not deceive me. I know it to be impossible."

"This is a wretched beginning," cries Elizabeth, lively in her very vexation. "My sole dependence was on you; and I am sure nobody else will believe me if you do not."

"Oh! Lizzy, it cannot be. I know how much you dislike him."

"You know nothing of the matter," Elizabeth con-

tradicts her indignantly. "That is all to be forgotten. Perhaps I did not always love him so well as I do now," she submits to own, "but in such cases as these a good memory is unpardonable. This is the last time I shall ever remember it myself."

"My dear, dear Lizzy, I would, I do congratulate you; but are you certain—forgive the question—are you quite certain that you can be happy with him?"

"There can be no doubt of that," asserts the bride-elect, briskly. "It is settled between us already that we are to be the happiest couple in the world!"

Elizabeth has still to hear the ungracious epithets she herself had first applied bestowed liberally on her lover. So successful had she been in diffusing her ideas, that the faith in them—together with Darcy's reserve—prevents even Mrs. Bennet, whose head is as full of lovers and future husbands as the feather-head of any extremely silly girl of sixteen, from viewing him in that light. "Good gracious!" she cries, as she stands at a window next morning, "if that disagreeable Mr. Darcy is not coming here again with our dear Bingley. What can he mean by being so tiresome as to be always coming here? I had no notion but that he would go a-shooting, or something or other, and not disturb us with his company. What shall we do with him? Lizzy, you must walk out with him again, that he may not be in Bingley's way."

Elizabeth cannot help laughing at so convenient an arrangement; still she smarts at the prolonged echo of her own idle words.

It is still worse when Darcy has asked Mr. Bennet for Elizabeth's hand, on the understanding that she herself has accepted him, and Elizabeth is bidden go to her father.

Mr. Bennet is walking up and down the library, looking grave and anxious. "Lizzy," he says, "what are you doing? Are you out of your senses to be accepting this man? Have not you always hated him?"

How she wishes her former opinions had been more

reasonable, her expressions more moderate, that her pride and modesty might have been spared unsaying her own declarations on the one hand, and on the other making professions which are generally taken for granted. In some confusion she assures her father of her regard for Mr. Darcy.

“Or, in other words, you are determined to have him. He is rich, to be sure, and you may have finer clothes and finer carriages than Jane. But will they make you happy?”

“Have you any other objection than your belief in my indifference?” Elizabeth finds voice to say.

“None at all,” her father admits. “We all know him to be a proud, unpleasant sort of man, but that would be nothing if you really liked him.”

“I do, I do like him, I love him,” protests poor Elizabeth, with unwonted tears in her bright eyes, partly called forth by the trial of having to make such an awkward confession, partly provoked by the aspersions cast on Darcy, for which she was to blame in the first instance. “Indeed, he has no improper pride. He is perfectly amiable. You do not know what he really is; then pray do not pain me by speaking of him in such terms.”

In spite of this warm defence, Mr. Bennet, with an honourable disinterestedness that does him credit as a man, and with no lack of fatherly tenderness—which even goes so far as to hint at the rock on which his own happiness has been wrecked—continues to remonstrate with his favourite daughter. No doubt he has given Darcy his consent, he says, with a flavour of his usual sardonic humour in his speech, for he is the kind of man to whom he should never dare refuse anything which he condescended to ask. Her father will give the same consent to Elizabeth if she is resolved on having it. But, changing his tone, he implores her to think better of the step she is about to take. She will be neither happy nor respectable unless she truly esteems her husband—unless she looks up to him as a superior. Her lively talents

will be a snare to her. "My child," he ends with seriousness and feeling, "let me not have the grief of seeing you unable to respect your partner in life."

It is only after Elizabeth has entered into the fullest details of the progress of her love and Darcy's, with the obstacles it has overcome, and after she has told all that Darcy did for Lydia, that Mr. Bennet is not merely reconciled to the match, but is duly impressed by the merits of his future son-in-law. "And so Darcy did everything, made up the match, gave the money, paid the fellow's debts, and got him his commission! So much the better. It will save me a world of trouble and economy. Had it been your uncle's doing, I must and would have paid him; but these violent young lovers carry everything their own way. I shall offer to pay him to-morrow; he will rant and storm about his love for you; and there will be an end of the matter."

At last Mr. Bennet is in sufficient spirits to dismiss his daughter with the injunction, "If any young men come for Mary and Kitty, send them in, for I am quite at leisure."

Mrs. Bennet receives the announcement of her second daughter's prospects in a very different fashion, for which Elizabeth is not responsible. Elizabeth takes care to tell the tale in the privacy of her mother's dressing-room, after she has retired for the night. Here is the witty account of what followed. After remarking that the effect of Elizabeth's communication was most extraordinary, the author enters into particulars:—

"Mrs. Bennet sat quite still, and unable to utter a syllable; nor was it until many, many minutes that she could comprehend what she heard, though not in general backward to credit what was for the benefit of her family, or that came in the shape of a lover to any of them. She began at length to recover, to fidget about in her chair, get up, sit down again, wonder, and bless herself. "Good gracious! Lord bless me! only think! dear me! Mr. Darcy! who would have thought it? and is it really true? Oh, my sweetest Lizzy!

how rich and how great you will be! What pin-money! what jewels! what carriages you will have! Jane's is nothing to it—nothing at all! I am so pleased—so happy! Such a charming man! so handsome! so tall! Oh, my dear Lizzy, pray apologise for my having disliked him so much before. I hope he will overlook it. Dear, dear Lizzy! A house in town!—everything that is charming. Three daughters married! Ten thousand a year! Oh, Lord! what will become of me? I shall go distracted!”

When Elizabeth escapes, she has not been in her own room three minutes before her mother comes after her. “My dearest child!” she cries, “I can think of nothing else! Ten thousand a year, and very likely more! ’Tis as good as a lord! And a special licence! You must and shall be married by a special licence! But, my dearest love, tell me what dish Mr. Darcy is particularly fond of, that I may have it to-morrow.”

Elizabeth dreads the next day, but after all, it goes off better than she has dared to expect; for, luckily, Mrs. Bennet stands in such awe of her intended son-in-law, that she does not venture to speak to him, unless it is in her power to offer him any attention, and mark her deference for his opinion.

Elizabeth turns for relief to write, like an affectionate young girl at the summit of human bliss, telling her Aunt Gardiner to suppose as much as she chooses, bidding her write again soon, and praise *him* (the one him for Elizabeth then) a great deal more than she has done in her last letter; thanking her for not going to the Lakes last summer; declaring the idea of the ponies is delightful. They will go round the park every day. She—Elizabeth—is the happiest creature in the world. Perhaps other people have said so before, but none with such justice. She is happier, even, than Jane; *she* only smiles, Elizabeth laughs. Mr. Darcy sends Mrs. Gardiner all the love in the world that he can spare from the writer. They are all to come to Pemberley at Christmas.

Was ever a young bride's letter more full of frank, girlish joy, natural exultation, and glad look-out into the future?

Darcy writes to Lady Catherine, and acquaints her with the impending catastrophe, and she replies in such terms as for a time puts a stop to all intercourse between aunt and nephew.

Jane Austen begins her last chapter in her most sarcastic vein. "Happy for all her maternal feelings was the day on which Mrs. Bennet got rid of her two most deserving daughters. With what delighted pride she afterwards visited Mrs. Bingley and talked of Mrs. Darcy may be guessed. I wish I could say, for the sake of her family, that the accomplishment of her earnest desire in the establishment of so many of her children produced so happy an effect as to make her a sensible, amiable, well-informed woman for the rest of her life; though, perhaps, it was lucky for her husband, who might not have relished domestic felicity in so unusual a form, that she still was occasionally nervous, and invariably silly."

The rest of the few remaining paragraphs are in a gentler strain, though they record that even Bingley's easy temper and Jane's affectionate heart discover a year's residence in the immediate neighbourhood of Mrs. Bingley's relations enough for them; though scrupulous mention is made of Miss Bingley's paying all her arrears of civility to Elizabeth as Mrs. Darcy of Pemberley; and though a place is found for Lydia's letter, wishing her sisters joy, and containing the impudent, mendacious request that, after they have become so rich, they will think of her and Wickham when they have nothing better to do. He would like a place at Court, and she does not think they have money enough to live on without some help.

The concluding paragraphs tell a little more which is pleasanter as far as human nature is concerned. Jane and Elizabeth's darling wish is gratified by Bingley at last buying an estate in one of the counties next to

Derbyshire, so that the sisters dwell only thirty miles apart.

Mr. Bennet misses his second daughter so much that he is frequently found, a welcome guest, at Pemberley.

Mary and Kitty—especially the latter—derive lasting benefit from their elder sisters' marriages, and the superior society opened up to them.

Elizabeth and Georgiana Darcy love each other, like true sisters.

By Elizabeth's intercession Darcy is reconciled to his aunt, Lady Catherine, who consents to revisit Pemberley, in spite of the pollution which its woods have sustained, not merely from the presence of such a mistress, but from the visits of her uncle and aunt from the city. For Darcy and Elizabeth show how true and lasting is their happiness by always testifying the most cordial esteem and gratitude to the friends who had been the means, by bringing her to Derbyshire, of uniting the couple.

Thus ends a novel which has for nearly a century been viewed, with reason, as one of the best novels in the English language, which has been the delight of some of the greatest geniuses of this and other countries. It must always remain a marvel that it was the work of a country-bred girl in her twenty-first year.



NORTHANGER ABBEY.*

I.



“NORTHANGER ABBEY” begins in a quizzical vein, with a record of Catherine Morland’s disqualifications for her post of heroine, according to the popular acceptance of the term in Jane Austen’s days.

“No one who had ever seen Catherine Morland in her infancy would have supposed her born to be a heroine. Her situation in life, the character of her father and mother, her own person and disposition, were all equally against her. Her father was a clergyman, without being neglected or poor, and a very respectable man, though his name was Richard, and he had never been handsome. He had a considerable independence, besides two good livings, and he was not in the least addicted to locking up his daughters. Her mother was a woman of useful plain sense, with a good temper, and, what is more remarkable, with a good constitution. She had three sons before Catherine was born, and instead of dying in bringing the latter into the world, as anybody might expect, she still lived on—lived to have six children more, to see them growing up around her, and to enjoy excellent health herself. A family of ten children

* Written in 1798. “Read Dickens’s ‘Hard Times,’ and another book of ‘Pliny’s Letters;’ read ‘Northanger Abbey,’ worth all Dickens and Pliny together, yet it was the work of a girl.”—*Macaulay*.

will be always called a fine family, where there are heads, and legs, and arms enough for the number, but the Morlands had little other right to the word, for they were in general very plain, and Catherine, for many years of her life, as plain as any. She had a thin, awkward figure, a sallow skin, without colour, dark lank hair, and strong features; so much for her person; and not less unpropitious for heroism seemed her mind. She was fond of all boys' plays, and greatly preferred cricket, not merely to dolls, but to the more heroic enjoyments of infancy, nursing a dormouse, feeding a canary-bird, and watering a rose-bush. Indeed, she had no taste for a garden, and if she gathered flowers at all it was chiefly for the pleasure of mischief, at least so it was conjectured, from her always preferring those which she was forbidden to take. Such were her propensities; her abilities were quite as extraordinary. She never could learn or understand anything before she was taught, and sometimes not even then, for she was often inattentive, and occasionally stupid. Her mother was three months in teaching her only to repeat 'The Beggar's Petition,' and, after all, her next sister, Sally, could say it better than she could. Not that Catherine was always stupid; by no means; she learned the fable of 'The Hare and Many Friends' as quickly as any girl in England. Her mother wished her to learn music, and Catherine was sure she should like it, for she was very fond of tinkling the keys of the old forlorn spinet, so at eight years old she began. She learned a year, and could not bear it; and Mrs. Morland, who did not insist on her daughter's being accomplished in spite of incapacity and distaste, allowed her to leave off. The day which dismissed the music-master was one of the happiest of Catherine's life. Her taste for drawing was not superior, though whenever she could obtain the outside of a letter from her mother, or seize upon any other odd piece of paper, she did what she could in that way, by drawing houses and trees, hens and chickens, all very much like one another. Writing and accounts

she was taught by her father; French by her mother. Her proficiency in either was not remarkable, and she shirked her lessons in both whenever she could. What a strange, unaccountable character! for with all these symptoms of profligacy at ten years old, she had neither a bad heart nor a bad temper, was seldom stubborn, scarcely ever quarrelsome, and very kind to the little ones, with few interruptions of tyranny. She was, moreover, noisy and wild, hated confinement and cleanliness, and loved nothing so well in the world as rolling down the green slope at the back of the house."

The story agrees with the first paragraph. With the exception of "*Pride and Prejudice*," "*Northanger Abbey*"—another of Jane Austen's earlier novels—is the most purely humorous and satirical of the whole.

At fifteen, appearances are mending with Catherine. She begins to curl her hair, and long for balls. Her complexion improves, her features are softened by plumpness and colour, her eyes gain more animation, her figure more consequence, and from fifteen to seventeen her mind is in training for a heroine. She reads—in addition to the stories which had formerly constituted all her voluntary reading—such books as Jane Austen tells us, in her merry mockery, heroines must read in order to supply their memories with those quotations which are so serviceable and so soothing in the vicissitudes of their eventful lives. Catherine studies Pope and Gray, Thomson and Shakespeare. Can Catherine's sisters, in these days of much cramming and innumerable pursuits, bring forward even so respectable a list of authors with whom the young readers are intimately acquainted?

In drawing* Catherine is most wanting. Though she cannot write sonnets, she can read them; though there seems no chance of her throwing a whole party into raptures by a prelude on the piano, of her own

* Jane Austen may have had in her mind Mrs. Radcliffe's heroines; to whom sketching from nature seems to have come by nature—who were all, as a matter of course, accomplished artists.

composition, she can listen to other people's performances with very little fatigue. But she has not even sufficient command of the pencil to attempt a sketch of her lover's profile, that she may be detected in the design. She is not so conscious of the deficiency in the meantime, since she has reached the age of seventeen without the suspicion of a lover. Her biographer accounts for the blank in that bantering tone she assumes :—"There was not one lord in the neighbourhood; no, not even a baronet. There was not one family among their acquaintance who had reared and supported a boy accidentally found at their door; not one young man whose origin was unknown. Her father had no ward, and the squire of the parish no children."

But the perverseness of forty families cannot interfere with the destiny of a young lady who is to be a heroine : the wind will blow a hero to her.

Mr. Allen, the principal squire in Mr. Morland's Wiltshire parish of Fullerton, is ordered to Bath for the benefit of a gouty constitution; and his wife, a good-humoured woman, fond of Miss Morland, and probably aware that, if adventures will not befall a young lady in her own village, she must seek them abroad, invites the happy Catherine to accompany her.

Catherine was in luck, for Bath was the queen of the old watering-places; and a popular English watering-place at the close of the last century was a centre of bustle and gaiety, just as a country village was apt to be sunk in obscurity.

Before beginning Catherine's Bath career, Jane Austen suddenly lapses into seriousness for a moment, to tell her readers—lest they should ever have doubted it—that this young Catherine, going out into the world to meet her fortune, has an affectionate heart, her disposition is cheerful and open—without conceit or affectation of any kind, her manners are just removed from the awkwardness and shyness of a girl, her person is pleasing, and when in good looks pretty. Here the author's not very lavish indulgence to her heroine col-

lapses—"and her mind," the sentence ends, is "about as ignorant and uninformed as the female mind at seventeen usually is."

How old was the judge who made this sweeping, though good-humouredly disdainful estimate of the mental acquirements of her companions? Just five or six years older. Jane Austen had not quite attained the venerable age of twenty-three when she uttered this severe reflection.

Compared to some of Jane Austen's other heroines, Catherine Morland has none of the astuteness and brilliance of Elizabeth Bennet and Emma Woodhouse, the delicate intuitions of Fanny Price, or the gentle, womanly wisdom of Anne Elliot. Catherine is a simple, single-hearted girl who, in her guilelessness and ignorance of the world, falls into mistakes impossible for the others. But she does not lack judgment, which one feels will ripen with her years. Above all, she is like every one of her author's heroines, right-minded and wholesome-hearted. At the same time she is a genuinely girlish girl, as much carried away by her feelings and her imagination as the most foolish of good girls can be; but withal we always recognise in her the possibilities of a sensible as well as an amiable woman.

The witty banter on the author's part is soon resumed. At parting, Mrs. Morland, in place of solemnly warning her daughter against the noblemen and baronets who were in the habit of cozening away young ladies to remote farm-houses, simply bids her wrap herself warm about the throat when she comes from "the Rooms" at night, and try to keep an account of what money she spends.

Sally, or rather Sarah (for what young lady of common gentility will reach the age of sixteen without altering her name as far as she can?), the sister next Catherine in age, does not exact from her a promise to write by every post, and repeat each detail that happens to her.

Mr. Morland, instead of giving Catherine an unlimited order on his banker, or even putting a hundred pounds bank bill into her hands, gives her only ten guineas, and promises her more when she wants it.

Nay, the journey to Bath provides neither tempests nor robbers (see again the "Mysteries of Udolpho," with which Jane Austen was so familiar, to which she refers with strong and repeated commendation in this very story, which is, however, in many passages, a burlesque on the old romance). No greater alarm occurs than a fear on Mrs. Allen's side of having once left her clogs behind her at an inn, and that fortunately turns out to be groundless.

The mention of the clogs, and the inference of the nights at the inns by the way, a necessary experience of travellers who journeyed in their own carriages, or by post as Jane Austen herself was accustomed to do, are the sole things which remind us that the little party travelling thus in the last century do not belong to our neighbours to-day.

Farther removed from us is Bath when it was the height of the fashion, and frequented by crowds of pleasure-seekers in addition to health-seekers. Its gaiety was at once systematic and exuberant, when all the company gathered regularly in the Pump-room, where the visitors not only drank their allotted draughts of water, but walked about, sat, read, gossiped, or looked at the pretty knick-nacks in what formed a kind of bazaar. The evenings were still more social; with their assemblies, held within the early hours that permitted their nightly recurrence, their parties for tea and cards, in addition to dancing, their Master of the Ceremonies to play propriety. Bath brought together old friends and strangers from the ends of the earth, who would not otherwise have had a chance of meeting. It enabled quiet, home-keeping young people to see and enjoy, for a little, society and the great world. In its use and abuse it was the scene where innumerable love affairs had their origin and marriages were made up.

Its seasons had their stars, belles, and lions, like the London seasons.

A few foreign watering-places offer at present the nearest resemblance, but that in a very modified degree, to Bath in its palmy days.

Jane Austen knew Bath well, both by reading and personal experience, alike in her youth and in her mature years. She introduces it as the locality—largely or in part—of two of her novels, and has a pointed reference to it in a third.* The lady humourist indicates with a sharp pen, as she indicates most things, the advantages and disadvantages of the watering-places, which figured so prominently in the social life of the period. In “Northanger Abbey” the advantages rather prevail. If Bath brings Catherine some undesirable friends, it brings her also the indispensable hero—not forthcoming elsewhere.

Miss Austen had resided years in Bath, and it was common ground which had lost its illusions to her when, after she had quitted it, she brought it and its convenient round of visitors and gaieties into “Persuasion.”

I fancy I detect a different spirit in treating the subject in “Northanger Abbey.” Bath had still to the author something of the ineffable charm it must have had for Catherine Morland, in the glamour of first acquaintance, and of the introduction of a country clergyman’s young daughter into a brilliant and fascinating society—a society which was then great in courtly, gallant, distinguished figures—royal, naval, military, literary. Tunbridge had waned before Bath, which was the field of much picturesque and interesting display. Now it was a wandering prince or princess, who was to be mobbed and stared at by the well-dressed throng. Another evening, patriotic enthusiasm persecuted a brave soldier, who had served in Egypt under Abercrombie and

* Weymouth and Ramsgate, among sea-bathing places, seemed to rise most readily before her mind, though she alluded also to Southend and Cromer—not to say described Lyme—which she made her own.

Moore, or a gallant sailor who had nailed his colours to the mast under Nelson or Collingwood; or it might be the crowd surged to and fro to enable honestly marvelling and admiring eyes to gaze on that wonderful genius, little Miss Burney, full of self-consciousness, as she tripped through the Rooms under the wing of the great brewer's wife, beautiful, dashing Mrs. Thrale, in the centre of a cluster of learned men and *petit-mâîtres*.

Mrs. Allen, Catherine Morland's chaperon, is thoroughly commonplace—except in a passion for dress, if that can be called uncommon. She believes she has done her best for Catherine in preparing her for her introduction to society, when Mrs. Allen and her maid have seen that the girl's hair is cut (in a crop!) and dressed by the most stylish hand, and her clothes put on with care. The next thing is to take her to one of the crowded assemblies, to struggle along and get squeezed, in the rush of strangers, to reach the top of the room, and see over the heads of the spectators—who always form a large preponderance of the company—the high feathers* of some of the privileged ladies who are dancing. Then the struggle begins again to reach one of the tea-rooms, and finally Mrs. Allen and Catherine leave, without speaking to anybody save Mr. Allen.

But though Mrs. Allen is content to be fine, and to look at other fine people, Catherine's wishes naturally extend a little further—to no purpose, for her companion is indolent, and does nothing more than serenely regret that they know nobody, and that the Skinners who were at Bath last year are not there again. Catherine, though by no means an unreasonable girl, feels slightly disappointed and tired of the irksomeness of an imprisonment in a crush of men and women, in full dress, with faces

* The fashion was a little absurd in its stateliness. Ladies were wont to wear nodding plumes of ostrich feathers, as at the Queen's drawing-rooms, standing upright on the head, till they added a foot, at least, to the fair amazons' height.

unknown to her, furnishing no deliverer. Her first ball—that eagerly looked-forward-to era—threatens her with the shock and mortification of proving a good deal of a failure.

At last, when the rooms are beginning to thin and patient sitters can be better seen, though nobody starts with rapturous wonder on beholding Catherine, no whisper of eager inquiry runs round the room, nor is she once called a divinity by anybody, Catherine overhears two gentlemen speak of her as “a pretty girl.”

“Such words had their due effect. She immediately thought the evening pleasanter than she had found it before; her humble vanity was contented; she felt more obliged to the two young men for this simple praise than a true quality heroine would have been for fifteen sonnets in celebration of her charms, and went to her chair in good humour with everybody, and perfectly satisfied with her share of public attention.”

Fresh-hearted, girlish, young Catherine! with her innocent satisfaction in the bare information that she possesses her moderate share of God’s gift of womanly beauty. One can fancy her little feet, in their clocked stockings and shoes with buckles, tapping out on the floor of the ancient sedan-chair, in which she is borne home from her modest revelry, that dance of which she has been defrauded.

But was it not like Jane Austen to leave her heroine without a partner at her first ball? After all, may not the temporary eclipse befall a girl without any fault of hers, or of others, and cannot the example of Catherine Morland teach her fellow-sufferers good-humoured resignation? It is the arrogant, ungenerous employment of such petty terms of slighting reproach as “wallflowers,” with the exaggeration of their influence by sensitive, inexperienced girls, which often renders harmless, youthful gaieties fertile in miserable mean jealousies, despicable, ill-bred triumphs, and endless heart-burnings.

After the usual routine of shopping and sightseeing, in addition to the Pump-room, after the Allens had

visited the Lower as well as the Upper Rooms with which Bath was supplied, Catherine has at last the satisfaction of finding the Master of the Ceremonies leading up to her, according to the etiquette of his office, a gentlemanlike young man named Tilney, who has desired to be presented to her, in order to ask her to be his partner in a country dance.

Catherine's partner, whom she regards with a flush of flattered pleasure, because he has flattered her by his selection of her—an absolute stranger in the crowded assembly, is about four or five and twenty, rather tall, and has one of those pleasing countenances to which Jane Austen always gave a marked and deserved preference over mere regularity of feature or glow of colouring. As to an interesting haggardness, a charming suspicion of wickedness, she, with all other good women in their senses, could not see either interest or charm in them.

Mr. Tilney possesses another advantage which was also in special favour with the author—a very intelligent, lively eye. The languidly supercilious and stupid “swells” of the nineteenth century would have been odious to the brilliant novelist of the eighteenth, even though she could have seen them endowed with tawny beards, Greek profiles, and that comically dubious attribute, a sleepy blue eye. The reputation of these fine gentlemen as lady-killers of the first water would have struck her in the light of an unmitigated disgrace, and not a crowning honour. The flavour of vice which seems to have so irresistible an attraction for many writers and readers would have been utterly repugnant to her, as to all pure-minded, high-souled men and women.

Henry Tilney begins his acquaintance with Catherine Morland, by making kindly fun to her and of her, with great impartiality.

Catherine, sometimes seeing through his assumptions, sometimes thoroughly taken in by them, is equally pleased, in sheer willingness to be pleased.

Henry Tilney mimics successfully the stereotyped conversation of newly-introduced partners at the Rooms. For his own amusement and Catherine's he describes the different lights in which he may figure in her journal—"‘Friday—Went to the Lower Rooms; wore my sprigged muslin robe with blue trimmings, plain black shoes; appeared to much advantage; but was strangely harassed by a queer half-witted man, who would make me dance with him, and distressed me by his nonsense;’ or, ‘I danced with a very agreeable young man, introduced by Mr. King; had a great deal of conversation with him; seems a most extraordinary genius; hope I may know more of him.’ *That, madam, is what I wish you to say.*”

He hoaxes her on the easy style of letter-writing for which ladies are so generally celebrated.

“I have sometimes thought,” says Catherine, naïvely, “whether ladies do write so much better letters than gentlemen.”

Mr. Tilney declares letter-writing among women is faultless, save in three particulars—a general deficiency of subject, a total inattention to stops, and a very frequent ignorance of grammar.

We fear that ladies’ letters still come largely under Mr. Tilney’s definition.

The young fellow even chaffs Mrs. Allen, when she appears to beg Catherine to take a pin out of her sleeve. She fears a hole has been torn in the gown, which is a favourite, though it cost but nine shillings a yard.

“That is exactly what I should have guessed it, madam,” said Mr. Tilney, looking at the muslin.

“Do you understand muslins, sir?”

“Particularly well: I always buy my own cravats, and am allowed to be an excellent judge; and my sister has often trusted me in the choice of a gown. I bought one for her the other day, and it was pronounced to be a prodigious bargain by every lady who saw it. I gave but five shillings a yard for it, and a true Indian muslin.”

Mrs. Allen was quite struck by his genius. "Men commonly take so little notice of those things," said she. "I can never get Mr. Allen to know one of my gowns from another. You must be a great comfort to your sister, sir."

"I hope I am, madam."

"And pray, sir, what do you think of Miss Morland's gown?"

"It is very pretty, madam," said he, gravely examining it; "but I do not think it will wash well. I am afraid it will fray."

"How can you," said Catherine, laughing, "be so——" she had almost said "strange?"

"I am quite of your opinion, sir," replied Mrs. Allen, "and so I told Miss Morland when she bought it."

"But then you know, madam, muslin always turns to some account or other; Miss Morland will get enough out of it for a handkerchief, or a cap, or a cloak. Muslin can never be said to be wasted. I have heard my sister say so forty times, when she has been extravagant in buying more than she wanted, or careless in cutting it to pieces." *

A few inquiries satisfy Mr. Allen that young Tilney is a clergyman belonging to a very respectable family in Gloucestershire.

Catherine having found a partner, is next to secure a young lady friend. Mrs. Allen stumbles unexpectedly in the Pump-room on an old acquaintance of early days in a Mrs. Thorpe, the mother of several sons and daughters.

Isabella Thorpe, the eldest daughter, on being introduced to Catherine, surprises her by exclaiming on her resemblance to her brother, and Catherine recollects that her eldest brother had spent the last week of his college vacation with the family of a member of his college, named Thorpe.

* Let us echo Henry Tilney's praise of muslin. Will its simple, elegant, once wide reign never return? The prevalence of calico balls is a poor substitute for its sway.

Miss Thorpe is a beautiful girl, four years older than Catherine, and more than four years better informed in knowledge of the world. She has no objection to bestow her superior knowledge—in discovering a flirtation between any gentleman and lady who only smile on each other, and pointing out a quiz*—on her companion. As for Catherine, she might have been a little afraid of such undreamt-of powers of observation, had it not been for what she readily accepted as the easy gaiety of Miss Thorpe's manner, and for the gratitude inspired by the circumstance that her new friend was profuse in her expressions of delight over their acquaintance.

The reproach of being "gushing," with the affectation of being destitute of natural affection, good principles, good feelings, and good manners, did not exist last century. But my readers will observe that, while Isabella Thorpe gushes to excess, Catherine, simple and natural, is in a great measure free from the offence.

Mrs. Allen and Mrs. Thorpe renew their old intimacy, and Isabella and Catherine rush into a bosom friendship. "They called each other by their Christian names, were always arm-in-arm when they walked, pinned up each other's train for the dance, and were not to be divided in the set; and if a rainy morning deprived them of other enjoyments, they were still resolute in meeting in defiance of wet and dirt, and shut themselves up to read novels together."

Jane Austen takes this opportunity of writing a spirited defence of her art. "Yes, novels," she repeats, "for I will not adopt the ungenerous and impolitic custom so common with novel-writers† of degrading by

* The old-fashioned term "quiz" was freely applied last century. It was originally associated with the first specimen of eye-glass, through which the short-sighted were supposed to quiz their neighbours. I should suppose Jane Austen must have been called a quiz in her day. The accusation was half coveted, half dreaded, according to the temper of the individual who incurred it.

† The remonstrance is still needed.

their contemptuous censure the very performances to the number of which they are themselves adding; joining with their greatest enemies in bestowing the harshest epithets on such works, and scarcely ever permitting them to be read by their own heroine, who, if she accidentally take up a novel, is sure to turn over its insipid pages with disgust. Alas! if the heroine of one novel be not patronised by the heroine of another, from whom can she expect protection and regard? I cannot approve of it. Let us leave it to the reviewers to abuse such effusions of fancy at their leisure, and over every new novel to talk in threadbare strains of the trash with which the press now groans. Let us not desert one another; we are an injured body. Although our productions have afforded more extensive and unaffected pleasure than those of any other literary corporation in the world, no species of composition has been so much decried. From pride, ignorance, or fashion, our foes are almost as many as our readers; and while the abilities of the nine-hundredth abridger of the History of England, or of the man who collects and publishes in a volume some dozen lines of Milton, Pope, and Prior, with a paper from the 'Spectator,' and a chapter from Sterne, are eulogised by a thousand pens, there seems almost a general wish of decrying the capacity and undervaluing the labours of the novelist, and of slighting the performances which have only genius, wit and taste to recommend them. 'I am no novel reader;' 'I seldom look into novels;' 'Do not imagine that *I* often read novels;' 'It is really very well for a novel;'—such is the common cant. 'And what are you reading, Miss ——?' 'Oh, it is only a novel!' replies the young lady; while she lays down her book with affected indifference or momentary shame. It is only 'Cecilia,' or 'Camilla,' or 'Belinda,' or, in short, only some work in which the greatest powers of the mind are displayed, in which the most thorough knowledge of human nature, the happiest delineation of its varieties, the liveliest effusions of wit and humour, are conveyed to the world

in the best-chosen language.* Now had the same young lady been engaged with a volume of 'The Spectator' instead of such a work, how proudly would she have produced the book and told its name!"

It would be strange indeed if a young lady were now discovered reading a volume of "The Spectator." One might as soon expect to see a modern maiden seated at a spinning-wheel, or twirling a distaff and spindle.

But what an analysis of schoolgirl friendships, occupations, and interests survives in the sixth chapter of "Northanger Abbey!" The following conversation is an example of the attachment of the friends after an acquaintance of eight or nine days, and of the "delicacy, discretion, originality of thought, and literary taste which marked the reasonableness of that attachment:"—

"They met by appointment, and as Isabella had arrived nearly five minutes before her friend, her first address naturally was, 'My dearest creature, what can have made you so late? I have been waiting for you at least this age!'

"'Have you, indeed? I am very sorry for it, but really I thought I was in very good time. It is but just one. I hope you have not been here long?'

"'Oh, these ten ages, at least. I am sure I have been here this half-hour. But now let us go and sit down at the other end of the room and enjoy ourselves. I have a hundred things to say to you. In the first place, I was so afraid it would rain this morning, just as I wanted to set off: it looked very showery, and that would have thrown me into agonies! Do you know, I saw the prettiest hat you can imagine in a shop-window in Milsom Street, just now: very like yours, only with coquelicot ribbons instead of green; I quite longed for it. But, my dearest Catherine, what have you been doing with yourself, all this morning? Have you gone on with "Udolpho?"'

* Since these words were written we have had the whole of the "Waverley Novels," not to mention more modern gains added to our wealth of excellent English works of fiction.

“‘Yes; I have been reading it ever since I woke; and I am got to the black veil.’

“‘Are you, indeed? How delightful! Oh, I would not tell you what is behind the black veil for the world! Are you not wild to know?’

“‘Oh, yes, quite; what can it be? But do not tell me; I would not be told, on any account. I know it must be a skeleton. I am sure it is *Laurentina’s* skeleton! Oh, I am delighted with the book! I should like to spend my whole life in reading it, I assure you. If it had not been to meet you, I would not have come away from it for all the world.’

“‘Dear creature! how much I am obliged to you! And when you have finished “*Udolpho*,” we will read “*The Italian*” together; and I have made out a list of ten or twelve more of the same kind for you.’

“‘Have you, indeed? How glad I am! What are they all?’

“‘I will read you their names directly; here they are, in my pocket-book—“*Castle of Wolfenbach*,” “*Clermont*,” “*Mysterious Warnings*,” “*Necromancer of the Black Forest*,” “*Midnight Bell*,” “*Orphan of the Rhine*,” and “*Horrid Mysteries*.” Those will last us some time.’

“‘Yes, pretty well; but are they all horrid? Are you sure they are all horrid?’*

“‘Yes, quite sure; for a particular friend of mine, a Miss Andrews, a sweet girl, one of the sweetest creatures in the world, has read every one of them. I wish you knew Miss Andrews, you would be delighted with her. She is netting herself the sweetest cloak you can conceive. I think her as beautiful as an angel; and I am so vexed with the men for not admiring her. I scold them all amazingly about it.’

“‘My dearest Catherine, have you settled what to

* There is this to be said for the sensational horrors which enchanted the girls of the last century, that these horrors, when founded on the model of Mrs. Radcliffe’s romances, were well principled, and free from inherent moral coarseness and license of tone.

wear on your head to-night?’ asked Isabella Thorpe, a few minutes afterwards. ‘I am determined, at all events, to be dressed exactly like you. The men take notice of that sometimes, you know.’

“‘But it does not signify if they do,’ said Catherine, very innocently.

“‘Signify! Oh, Heavens! I make it a rule never to mind what they say. They are often amazingly impertinent if you do not treat them with spirit, and make them keep their distance.’

“‘Are they? Well, I never observed *that*. They always behave very well to me.’

“‘Oh, they give themselves such airs. They are the most conceited creatures in the world, and think themselves of so much importance! By-the-bye, though I have thought of it a hundred times, I have always forgot to ask you what is your favourite complexion in a man. Do you like them best dark or fair?’

“‘I hardly know. I never much thought about it. Something between both, I think;—brown: not fair, and not very dark.’

“‘Very well, Catherine; that is exactly he. I have not forgot your description of Mr. Tilney—“a brown skin, with dark eyes and rather dark hair.” Well, my taste is different: I prefer light eyes; and as to complexion, do you know I like a sallow better than any other. You must not betray me, if you should ever meet with any one of your acquaintance answering that description.”

“‘Betray you! What do you mean?’

“‘Nay, do not distress me. I believe I have said too much. Let us drop the subject.’

“Catherine, in some amazement, complied; and after remaining a few moments silent, was on the point of reverting to what interested her, at that time, rather more than anything else in the world—Laurentina’s skeleton—when her friend prevented her, by saying, ‘For Heaven’s sake! let us move away from this end of the room. Do you know there are two odious young

men who have been staring at me this half-hour. They really put me quite out of countenance. Let us go and look at the arrivals. They will hardly follow us there.'

"Away they walked to the book; and while Isabella examined the names, it was Catherine's employment to watch the proceedings of these alarming young men.

" 'They are not coming this way, are they? I hope they are not so impertinent as to follow us. Pray let me know if they are coming: I am determined I will not look up.'

"In a few moments, Catherine, with unaffected pleasure, assured her that she need not be longer uneasy, as the gentlemen had just left the Pump-room.

" 'And which way are they gone?' said Isabella, turning hastily round. 'One was a very good-looking young man.'

" 'They went towards the churchyard.'

" 'Well, I am amazingly glad I have got rid of them; and now what say you to going to Edgar's Buildings with me, and looking at my new hat? You said you should like to see it.'

"Catherine readily agreed. 'Only,' she added, 'perhaps we may overtake the two young men.'

" 'Oh, never mind that. If we make haste, we shall pass by them presently, and I am dying to show you my hat.'

" 'But if we only wait a few minutes, there will be no danger of our seeing them at all.'

" 'I shall not pay them any such compliment, I assure you. I have no notion of treating men with such respect. That is the way to spoil them.'

"Catherine had nothing to oppose against such reasoning, and therefore, to show the independence of Miss Thorpe, and her resolution of humbling the sex, they set off immediately, as fast as they could walk, in pursuit of the two young men."

II.

As the girls are crossing a street, they are stopped by the approach of a gig, driven along on bad pavement, by a most knowing-looking coachman, with all the vehemence that could most fully endanger the lives of himself, his companion, and his horse.

“Oh! these odious gigs,” cries Isabella, “how I detest them!”

But the detestation—though so just, is of short duration, for she looks again and exclaims, “Delightful! Mr. Morland and my brother!”

James Morland, a steady, amiable young man, had fallen a victim to Isabella’s charms. Two results which had followed his subjection were his own forced alliance with Isabella’s brother, John, and Isabella’s violent friendship with James’s sister, Catherine.

James and Catherine Morland, an affectionate brother and sister, are very happy to meet each other—quite unexpectedly on Catherine’s part. But little leisure is left for fraternal greetings, since the bright eyes of Miss Thorpe are incessantly challenging Mr. Morland’s notice.

John Thorpe, who has only slightly and carelessly touched his sister’s hand, is sufficiently impressed by Catherine to grant her a whole scrape, and half a short bow.

John Thorpe is one of Jane Austen’s finished and unsurpassable portraits. He is the “buck” of the period, the slangy, horsey, blustering, bragging young fellow of all time.

“He was a stout young man of middling height, who, with a plain face and ungraceful form, seemed fearful of being too handsome unless he wore the dress of a groom, and too much like a gentleman unless he were easy where he ought to be civil, and impudent where he might be allowed to be easy.”

I am not able to afford space for much of his highly characteristic talk, but here is a specimen. “He took out

his watch. 'How long do you think we have been running it from Tetbury, Miss Morland?'

"'I do not know the distance.'

"Her brother told her that it was twenty-three miles."

"'Three-and-twenty!' cried Thorpe; 'five-and-twenty, if it is an inch.'

"Morland remonstrated, pleaded the authority of road-books, inn-keepers and mile-stones; but his friend disregarded them all; he had a sure test of distance. 'I know it must be five-and-twenty,' said he, 'by the time we have been doing it. It is now half after one; we drove out of the inn-yard at Tetbury as the town-clock struck eleven; and I defy any man in England to make my horse go less than ten miles an hour in harness; that makes it exactly twenty-five.'

"'You have lost an hour,' said Morland; 'it was only ten o'clock when we came from Tetbury.'

"'Ten o'clock! it was eleven, upon my soul! I counted every stroke. This brother of yours would persuade me out of my senses, Miss Morland; do but look at my horse, did you ever see an animal so made for speed in your life?'

"Catherine remarked the horse did look very hot.

"'Hot! he had not turned a hair till we came to Walcot Church; but look at his forehead; look at his loins; only see how he moves; that horse *cannot* go less than ten miles an hour; tie his legs, and he will get on. What do you think of my gig, Miss Morland? A neat one, is it not? Well hung; town-built;'" and so on, ringing endless changes on John Thorpe's possessions, their super-excellence, and his cleverness in securing them.

John Thorpe pronounces his criticism on the novels of the day, in a slashing, manly style, which still survives here and there. Poor Catherine, tired of his bets, and his short, sharp praise or condemnation of every woman's face they pass, ventures to introduce the subject uppermost in her thoughts, "Have you ever read 'Udolpho,' Mr. Thorpe?'"

“ ‘Udolpho!’ Oh! Lord! not I; I never read novels; I have something else to do.”

Catherine, humbled and ashamed, was going to apologise for her question; but he prevented her.

“Novels are all so full of stuff and nonsense,” he said, with more to the same purpose, winding up by the assertion of novels in general that “they are the stupidest things in creation.”

“I think you must like ‘Udolpho,’ if you were to read it,” Catherine pleads wistfully for her favourite, “it is so very interesting.”

“Not I, faith! No, if I read any, it shall be Mrs. Radcliffe’s; her novels are amusing enough; they are worth reading; some fun and nature in *them*.”

“ ‘Udolpho’ was written by Mrs. Radcliffe,” said Catherine, with some hesitation, from the fear of mortifying him.

“No, sure; was it? Ay, I remember; so it was. I was thinking of that other stupid book, written by that woman they made such a fuss about; she who married the French emigrant.”

John Thorpe’s manners do not please Catherine, inexperienced though she is; but he is James’s friend, and Isabella’s brother. Besides, Catherine is told by Isabella that John finds her the most charming girl in the world, and John himself engages her for one of the dances at the evening’s assembly. Jane Austen points out—and here she has a gentle explanation of a girlish weakness—that, had Catherine been older and vainer, such attacks might have done little; but where youth and diffidence are united, it requires uncommon steadiness of reason to resist the attraction of being called the most charming girl in the world, and of being so very early engaged as a partner.

The young Morlands and Thorpes, with the good-natured concurrence of Mr. and Mrs. Allen, form many morning and evening engagements together. In the course of these engagements, Catherine likes John Thorpe less and less, in spite of his boisterous profes-

sions of admiration. She even begins to have painful doubts of the perfect amiability and good taste of her bosom friend and future sister—a prospective relationship which Catherine hailed with delight in the beginning.

Indeed, Isabella behaves with all the rampant selfishness, reckless disregard of appearances, and insatiable appetite for admiration with which a vain, coarse-minded, heartless Isabella Thorpe can behave. Her loud, insincere professions, which her practice contradicts so glaringly, could not have deceived Catherine even so long as they did, had it not been that the younger girl, brought up in the worthy clergyman's upright, kind-hearted household, is unsuspicious of evil, and guileless as a dove.

In broad contrast to the two wilful, wild Thorpes, are Henry Tilney and his sister, a sensible, good, pretty, and well-bred girl, who is young and attractive, and can enjoy herself at a ball, without wanting to fix the attention of every man near her, and without exaggerated feelings of ecstatic delight or inconceivable vexation on every little trifling occurrence.

In these *blasé, nil admirari* days, when many young people find nothing worth the trouble of being excited about, when enthusiasm is dead, and even moderate interest seems fast expiring, it may be thought that such warnings as are conveyed in the praise of Eleanor Tilney are not required. But I suspect it is a case of scratch the Russian, and you will find the Tartar. It is the fashion to appear indifferent and cynical, and so our very children—held up to us in the mirror of "Punch"—babble weariness with the world, and misanthropy. But the languor and scorn—happily for humanity—form a mere accidental crust, beneath which, more or less visible, are the old ardour and impetuosity, which need to be tutored to temperance and prudence, and charged never to forget their Christian baptism of generous self-forgetfulness and chivalrous magnanimity, in a peaceful drawing-room as well as on a stricken battle-field.

The Tilneys, to whom Catherine is so strongly attracted, though perfectly civil in any encounter with the Thorpes, instinctively recoil from them. The different qualities of the young people, no less than the different sets in which they move, prevent amalgamation.

Many capital scenes in "Northanger Abbey" exhibit young Catherine Morland's puzzled distress at the clashing social elements among which she finds herself, with her own decided preference for the Tilneys, opposed to what she conceives is her allegiance, alike of friendship and sisterly fidelity, to the Thorpes.

The best and most comical of the sketches are those in which Catherine is twice entrapped into driving with John Thorpe in the watering-place fashion of the time, making one of a party which is completed by James Morland and Isabella Thorpe in another open carriage.

"'You will not be frightened, Miss Morland,' said Thorpe as he handed her in, 'if my horse should dance about a little at first setting off. He will most likely give a plunge or two, and perhaps take the reins for a minute; but he will soon know his master. He is full of spirits, playful as can be, but there is no vice in him.'

"Catherine did not think the portrait a very inviting one, but it was too late to retreat, and she was too young to own herself frightened; so resigning herself to her fate, and trusting to the animal's boasted knowledge of its owner, she sat peaceably down and saw Thorpe sit down by her. Everything being then arranged, the servant who stood at the horse's head was bid, in an important voice, 'to let him go,' and off they went in the quietest manner imaginable, without a plunge or a caper, or anything like one.

"Catherine, delighted at so happy an escape, spoke her pleasure aloud with grateful surprise; and her companion immediately made the matter perfectly simple by assuring her that it was entirely owing to the peculiarly judicious manner in which he had then held the reins and the singular discernment and dexterity with which he had directed his whip.

“ ‘Old Allen is as rich as a Jew, is not he?’ said Thorpe, breaking a silence. Catherine did not understand him, and he repeated his question, adding in explanation, ‘Old Allen, the man you are with?’

“ ‘Oh, Mr. Allen you mean. Yes, I believe he is very rich.’

“ ‘And no children at all?’

“ ‘No, not any.’

“ ‘A famous thing for his next heirs. He is your godfather, is not he?’

“ ‘My godfather! No.’

“ ‘But you are always very much with them?’

“ ‘Yes, very much.’

“ ‘Ay, that is what I meant. He seems a good kind of old fellow enough, and has lived very well in his time, I dare say; he is not gouty for nothing. Does he drink his bottle a day now?’

“ ‘His bottle a day! No. Why should you think such a thing? He is a very temperate man, and you could not fancy him in liquor last night?’

“ ‘Lord help you! You women are always thinking of men’s being in liquor. Why, you do not suppose a man is overset by a bottle?’ ”

Modest as Catherine is in her unsophisticatedness, she betrays unconsciously her admiration of Henry Tilney, both to the gentleman and his sister. Fortunately, Catherine has fallen into good hands. Eleanor Tilney only likes her friend the better for liking her brother. With regard to the effect on the hero, of the girl’s tribute to his merits, Jane Austen has made a few pungent observations.

It may be that the world has grown a little wiser as well as older during the last hundred years. Certainly sensible, good young girls—however young and simple—have learnt, for the most part, to put more outward restraint, we would fain hope, in the course of some improvement on their education, on their inner sentiments. Girls have acquired a degree of the subtlety of the serpent in addition to the artlessness of the dove.

The Catherine Morland of the past is always frank, sweet, and dutiful. We can never, we are thankful, doubt her reverence and uprightness. We need never fear scandalous defiance of the laws of God and man from her. But drawn as she is, by the masterly pen of Jane Austen, Catherine is often exasperatingly foolish, and especially so in falling deeply in love, on the very slightest provocation, so far as any symptom of reciprocity of feeling on Henry Tilney's side is made plain to the readers of "Northanger Abbey."

Indeed, Jane Austen expressly states, with her usual dauntless candour, that the love begins on Catherine's side, and that the agreeable—let us hope grateful—sense of the regard he has unwittingly inspired, is the spark which kindles a responsive flame in the young man's breast.

But what would have become of Catherine had Henry Tilney been—not pre-engaged, we do not suspect him of unworthy concealment in such circumstances; of course he would have smiled the smile, bowed the bow, and danced the dance of a man whose heart and hand were bespoken;—but had he only been less complacent, less gracious, less honourable?—she must have wasted her young love, and smarted under the sense of having given it unasked and in vain. Surely Catherine, inexperienced as she was, might have had the mother-wit to anticipate such a probability, and guard against the catastrophe, by being a little more dignified and reserved in allowing scope to her imagination and inclination? I hope that at least so much forethought may be looked for from sensible girls,—I say nothing of silly ones,—in the present generation. I am free to own that if a modern girl permitted her affections to be so easily entangled, with the entanglement so transparently displayed, as was true of Catherine Morland, I for one should at once set her down as a very impulsive heedless, young woman, from whom little self-respect and discretion could be looked for, at any time.

I do not take it upon me to say, whether a young

girl's chance of winning kindred regard might or might not be imperilled, in proportion to her capacity for practising womanly reticence. For the honour of men, I must hope it would.*

It is with diffidence that I presume to differ so far from such a close and accurate reader of human nature as Jane Austen was. But while I look at the different standards of different generations, I say that it would cast a serious reflection on the judgment and disinterestedness of all heroes, real or imaginary, if Jane Austen were in earnest and were right in her inference. This, at least, I entirely believe—that whether or not a girl may more readily gain or lose love by her reserve, without it she will never win respect, either from man or woman, and love without respect is like food without salt, destitute of permanent relish and endurance.

Catherine is eager to go to the cotillon ball, at which she is aware beforehand the Tilneys will be present. “What gown and what head-dress she should wear on the occasion become her chief concern. She cannot be justified in it. Dress is at all times a frivolous distinction, and excessive solicitude about it often destroys its own aim. Catherine knew all this very well; her grand-aunt had read her a lecture on the subject only the Christmas before, and yet she lay awake ten minutes on Wednesday night debating between her spotted and tamboured muslin, and nothing but the shortness of the time prevented her buying a new one for the evening. This would have been an error in judgment, great, though not uncommon, from which one of the other sex rather than her own, a brother rather than a great-aunt, might have warned her; for man only can be aware of the insensibility of man towards a new gown. It would be mortifying to the feelings of many ladies could they be made to understand how little the heart of man is affected by what is

* Perhaps the number of jilts in the last century have to do with spontaneous combustion where hearts were concerned.

costly or new in their attire, how little it is biassed by the texture of their muslin, and how unsusceptible of peculiar tenderness towards the spotted, the sprigged, the mull, or the jaconet. Woman is fine for her own satisfaction alone. No man will admire her the more, no woman will like her the better for it."

I have quoted this paragraph because it ought to be studied by the women of the present day. Alas! for the higher intelligence and refinement in fashion, when even the over-elaboration and extravagance of an earlier generation strike a later, as meagre shabbiness. Would that the young girls who now "walk in silk attire," and *crêpe de Chine*, and only condescend to tulle over satin, in a variety of evening dresses, could return to the spotted and sprigged muslins which were new when they were clean!* For old people who remember the grandmothers of modern belles, persist in saying that the faces now set in silver hair and puckered with wrinkles, the figures shrunk and bent, were "fairer," more graceful far—"lang syne."

Catherine has engaged herself with the greatest alacrity to walk with the two Tilneys among the beautiful environs of Bath the morning after the ball. The weather proves rainy—but Catherine, after alternations of hope and despondency, fruitless solicitations of Mrs. Allen's opinion, and equally fruitless wishes that they had such weather as was to be found in "Udolpho" the night that poor St. Aubyn died, for instance—has the great joy of seeing the sky clear. She is still waiting for her friends, when the two Thorpes and James Morland arrive in the greatest hurry to claim her for an excursion to Bristol.

Catherine excuses herself from accompanying the others, on the plea of her pre-engagement to walk with the Tilneys.

* Some of the beautiful portraits of the last century (one, if I recollect rightly, which represents Mrs. Sheridan and her sister) give an idea how daintily becoming, how perfectly elegant, these muslin costumes could be.

The Thorpes loudly exclaim at such an objection as not worth mentioning, and will take no denial—the truth being that Isabella, free and easy as she is, cannot well accompany the two gentlemen, for the rest of the day, unless she is countenanced by another lady. The casual mention of Blaize Castle, as certain to be visited in the course of the excursion, shakes even Catherine's fidelity to the Tilneys. Is it really a castle, an old castle such as they read of?

John Thorpe, with his forward unscrupulous assurance, is ready to pledge himself that it is the oldest castle in the kingdom, with towers and long galleries by dozens.

The wavering Catherine admits she should like to see it, but she cannot give up her walk with the Tilneys. She is sure they will be in Pulteney Street soon.

“‘Not they, indeed,’ cries John Thorpe with decision; ‘for as we turned into Broad Street I saw them. Does he not drive a phaeton with bright chestnuts?’”

“‘I do not know, indeed.’”

“‘Yes, I know he does; I saw him. You are talking of the man you danced with last night, are not you?’”

“‘Yes.’”

“‘Well, I saw him at that moment turn up the Lansdowne Road, driving a smart-looking girl.’”

“‘Did you, indeed?’”

“‘Did, upon my soul, knew him again directly; and he seemed to have got some very pretty cattle too.’”

“‘It is very odd. But I suppose they thought it would be too dirty for a walk.’”

“‘And well they might, for I never saw so much dirt in my life.’”

Catherine gives way. She starts in an unsettled frame of mind, divided between sorrow for the loss of her walk and still greater vexation at the thought that the Tilneys have not acted well by her, and delight at exploring an edifice like “Udolpho”—as her fancy represents Blaize Castle to be—which John Thorpe freely promises she shall explore in every hole and corner.

Are there left in England half-a-dozen romantic girls to whom the opportunity of visiting an old castle would be so great a treat?

But unfortunately for what peace of mind is left to Catherine, as she and John Thorpe rattle along, his question "Who was that girl who looked at you so hard as she went by?" calls her attention to the right-hand pavement, where, to her mingled delight and dismay, she recognises Miss Tilney on her brother's arm, walking slowly down the street. Catherine sees them both looking back at her.

"'Stop, stop, Mr. Thorpe!' she impatiently cried, 'it is Miss Tilney, it is indeed. How could you tell me they were gone? Stop, stop! I will get out this moment and go to them.'"

"But to what purpose did she speak? Thorpe only lashed his horse into a brisker trot; the Tilneys, who had soon ceased to look after her, were in a moment out of sight round the corner of Laura Place, and in another moment she was herself whisked into the Market Place. Still, however, and during the length of another street, she entreated him to stop. 'Pray, pray stop, Mr. Thorpe. I cannot go on, I will not go on; I must go back to Miss Tilney.'

"But Mr. Thorpe only laughed, smacked his whip, encouraged his horse, made odd noises, and drove on; and Catherine, angry and vexed as she was, having no power of getting away, was obliged to give up the point, and submit. Her reproaches, however, were not spared.

"'How could you deceive me so, Mr. Thorpe? How could you say that you saw them driving up the Lansdowne Road? I would not have had it happen so for the world. They must think it so strange, so rude of me, to go by them, too, without saying a word! You do not know how vexed I am. I shall have no pleasure at Clifton, nor in anything else. I had rather, ten thousand times rather, get out now and walk back to them. How could you say you saw them driving out in a phaeton?'

“Thorpe defended himself very stoutly, declared he had never seen two men so much alike in his life, and would hardly give up the point of its having been Tilney himself.”

It is unnecessary to dwell on Catherine's distress when even her unassuming, good-natured civility fails her. Her single comfort is Blaize Castle, but Blaize Castle she is not destined to see. It is too late in the day, the horses are not equal to the expedition, and the party have to turn back to Bath.

Catherine ventures to call on Miss Tilney, to explain why she has not kept her appointment. She is not admitted at the house in Milsom Street, though she has a wretched conviction that Miss Tilney is at home—a conviction confirmed by seeing her in a few moments afterwards go out with her father, General Tilney.

Catherine is punished—even, she thinks, too severely—but she is too miserable to be angry.

Catherine next sees the Tilneys at the theatre. Henry Tilney bows, but with a changed countenance; still, he comes round to the Allens' box to pay his respects to Mrs. Allen, and there Catherine, like the impetuous, humble-minded young girl she is, overwhelms him with the breathlessness and earnestness of her apologies. “Oh! Mr. Tilney, I have been quite wild to speak to you, and make my apologies. You must have thought me so rude; but, indeed, it was not my own fault. Was it, Mrs. Allen? Did not they tell me that Mr. Tilney and his sister were gone out in a phaeton together? And then, what could I do? But I had ten thousand times rather have been with you. Now, had not I, Mrs. Allen?”

The words bring a more cordial, more natural smile to the gentleman's lips, though he suggests a little sarcastically that he and his sister were at least much obliged to her for wishing them a pleasant walk. She had looked back on purpose.

After all, the lingering air of being piqued, which

Henry Tilney cannot conceal, is the best evidence of Catherine's dawning influence.

But the stupid girl takes his words literally. "Indeed, I did not wish you a pleasant walk; I never thought of such a thing; but I begged Mr. Thorpe so earnestly to stop; I called out to him as soon as ever I saw you. Now, Mrs. Allen, did not—— Oh! you were not there. But indeed I did; and if Mr. Thorpe would only have stopped, I would have jumped out and run after you."

"Is there a Henry in the world," exclaims Jane Austen, "who could be insensible to such a declaration?" Perhaps not. Yet we are tempted to wonder if Jane Austen had ever listened to the sarcastic old song—

"The fruit that will fall without shaking
Is rather too mellow for me;"

or to that valuable warning in wooing—

"When a woman is willing,
A man can but look like a fool."

If all girls were as quickly captivated as Catherine Morland, what would become of the wooing—the pursuit—the probation, during which Elizabeth Barrett Browning asserts a man may be content to be treated "worse than dog or mouse" when it is but the prelude to the girl's becoming his for ever?

Catherine, in her extreme candour, persists that Miss Tilney must have been angry, since she was in the house, but would not see her—Catherine—when she called.

In Henry Tilney's hasty explanation that it was his father—there was nothing in it, beyond the circumstance that General Tilney wished his daughter to walk out with him, and could not be kept waiting—we have the first hint that General Tilney has "ways." He is, for that matter, an extremely tyrannical old gentleman.

Catherine has her walk, and for once the reality fulfils the expectation.

Whether intentionally or accidentally, Jane Austen illustrates the contrast between John Thorpe and Henry Tilney by their different estimates of novels. The walking-party had determined to walk round Beechen Cliff—"that noble hill," Jane Austen calls it, in more than her ordinary chary words of description, "whose beautiful verdure and hanging coppice* render it so striking an object from almost every opening in Bath."

"‘I never look at it,’ said Catherine, as they walked along the side of the river, ‘without thinking of the south of France.’

"‘You have been abroad then?’ said Henry, a little surprised.

"‘Oh, no; I only mean what I have read about. It always puts me in mind of the country that Emily and her father travelled through in the ‘Mysteries of Udolpho.’ But you never read novels, I dare say.’

"‘Why not?’

"‘Because they are not clever enough for you; gentlemen read better books.’

"‘The person, be it gentleman or lady, who has not pleasure in a good novel, must be intolerably stupid. I have read all Mrs. Radcliffe’s works, and most of them with great pleasure. The ‘Mysteries of Udolpho,’ when I had once begun it, I could not lay down again; I remember finishing it in two days, my hair standing on end the whole time.’

"‘Yes,’ added Miss Tilney; ‘and I remember that you undertook to read it aloud to me; and that when I was called away for only five minutes to answer a note, instead of waiting for me, you took the volume into the Hermitage Walk; and I was obliged to stay till you had finished it.’†

* Wood and water always figure largely in Jane Austen’s landscapes.

† The *furor* about the "Mysteries of Udolpho," in its day, was, indeed, not confined to school-girls. It extended over the whole reading world. It was European, as well as English.

“‘But I really thought before,’ persisted Catherine, ‘young men despised novels amazingly?’

“‘It is *amazingly*; it may well suggest *amazement*, if they do, for they read nearly as many as women. I myself have read hundreds and hundreds. Do not imagine that you can cope with me in a knowledge of Julias and Louisas. If we proceed to particulars, and engage in the never-ceasing inquiry of ‘Have you read this?’ or ‘Have you read that?’ I shall soon leave you as far behind me as—what shall I say? I want an appropriate simile—as far as your friend Emily herself left poor Valancourt, when she went with her aunt into Italy. Consider how many years I have had the start of you. I had entered on my studies at Oxford while you were a good little girl, working your sampler at home.’”

About this time Captain Tilney, General Tilney’s eldest son, a handsome, fashionable young man, arrives on a visit to his family. Catherine is most willing to acknowledge his advantages, but his tastes and manners are decidedly inferior, in her opinion, after she hears him, at one of the assemblies, not only protest against every thought of dancing himself, but even laugh openly at his brother Henry for finding it possible.

Isabella, who has begun by announcing her intention to sit all the evening, in compliment to James Morland’s temporary absence, is soon seen dancing with Captain Tilney, in spite of his and her protest.

James Morland’s application to his father for his consent to his marriage with Isabella Thorpe brings a kind and considerate answer. A family living of four hundred a year is to be resigned to James; an estate of nearly equal value is secured to him. The greatest trial is that the young couple must wait two or three years, till James Morland can take orders.

James and Catherine, being good and reasonable children, are perfectly satisfied with their father’s generosity.

Isabella says the prospect is very charming, but says it with a grave face.

The period of the Allens' visit to Bath is drawing to a close, and the question whether they may stay longer or not seems to involve the happiness of Catherine's whole life; and so, when the lodgings are taken for another fortnight, everything appears secured. "What this additional fortnight was to produce to her beyond the pleasure of sometimes seeing Henry Tilney, made but a small part of Catherine's speculation;" Jane Austen comments with regard to her heroine's unreasonable joy. "Once or twice, indeed, since James's engagement had taught her what *could* be done, she had got so far as to indulge in a secret 'perhaps;' but, in general, the felicity of being with him for the present bounded her views. The present was now comprised in another three weeks; and her happiness being certain for that period, the rest of her life was at such a distance as to excite but little interest." This is pre-eminently the calculation of seventeen, when a month in anticipation reckons as a year, a year as a life-time.

However, when Catherine calls for Miss Tilney with the glad news, she receives an unexpected blow. The Tilneys are to quit Bath soon. Poor Catherine cannot hide her dejection, but an ample compensation, far beyond her brightest hopes, awaits her.

Miss Tilney stammers some words of invitation, which are at once seconded by her father. The General, so far from being haughty to Catherine, has distinguished her by an oppressively marked degree of attention, which has rather a tendency to extinguish the frank kindness of his son and daughter.

Catherine is now pressed in the most flatteringly solicitous manner, by this somewhat overpowering fine gentleman, to go with the family to Northanger Abbey, and give his daughter the pleasure of her company there, for a few weeks.

Catherine is to be the Tilneys' chosen visitor: "She was to be for weeks under the same roof with the person whose society she most prized; and in addition to all the rest, this roof was to be the roof of an Abbey! Her

passion for ancient edifices was next in degree to her passion for Henry Tilney, and castles and abbeys made usually the charm of those reveries which his image did not fill. To see and explore either the ramparts and keep of the one, or the cloisters of the other, had been for many weeks a darling wish, though to be more than the visitor of an hour had seemed too nearly impossible for desire; and yet this was to happen. With all the chances against her of house, hall, place, park, court and cottage, Northanger turned up an Abbey, and she was to be its inhabitant. Its long damp passages, its narrow cells and ruined chapel, were to be within her daily reach; and she could not entirely subdue the hope of some traditional legends, some awful memorials of an injured and ill-fated nun."

Catherine's happiness is not without alloy. Isabella improves the occasion of being with Catherine at the Pump-room one morning, to tell her that John Thorpe is over head and ears in love with her, and to urge his suit, greatly to Catherine's astonishment and discomfiture. For has not Isabella long professed herself convinced of a mutual attachment between Henry Tilney and her friend?

Catherine, with all the innocence of truth, protests her ignorance of Mr. Thorpe's wishes, and her incapacity to respond to them.

Isabella accepts her brother's disappointment with a wonderfully good grace, though she will imply, in spite of Catherine's indignant denial, that there has been a relinquished flirtation, a change of mind on Catherine's part, which Isabella would be the last person to blame.

As the girls are speaking, they are joined by Captain Tilney, and Catherine is first bewildered and then shocked to find him addressing her friend and future sister in terms which cannot be mistaken. "'What! always to be watched in person or proxy?' he said low, but not too low for Catherine to hear.

"'Pshaw! nonsense!' was Isabella's answer, in the same half-whisper; 'why do you put such things into

my head? If I could believe it! my spirit, you know, is pretty independent.'

"'I wish your heart were independent, that would be enough for me.'

"'My heart, indeed! What can you have to do with hearts? You men have none of you any hearts.'

"'If we have not hearts we have eyes, and they give us torment enough.'

"'Do they? I am sorry for it; I am sorry they find anything so disagreeable in me. I will look another way. I hope this pleases you' (turning her back on him). 'I hope your eyes are not tormented now.'

"'Never more so, for the edge of a blooming cheek is still in view, at once too much and too little.'"

Catherine will not remain longer. She is confounded; but still the girl who is so honourable herself can think no greater evil than that Captain Tilney has fallen in love with Isabella, and that Isabella is unconsciously encouraging him—unconsciously it must be, for Isabella's attachment to James is as certain as their engagement.

But when Catherine sees Isabella admitting Captain Tilney's attentions in public as readily as they are offered, and allowing him almost an equal share with James of her notice and smiles, charity itself cannot vindicate the lady's conduct.

Catherine has too much good sense to continue to be deceived. She tries to believe still that Isabella cannot be aware of the pain she is inflicting; but her friend must resent the wilful thoughtlessness, since James is the sufferer.

When Catherine Morland learns that Captain Tilney is to remain in Bath after his family have left, she speaks to Henry Tilney on the subject. She expresses her regret for his brother's evident admiration of Miss Thorpe, and entreats him to make known her engagement.

"'My brother does know it.'

"'Does he? Then why does he stay here?'

“He made no reply, and was beginning to talk of something else; but she eagerly continued, ‘Why do not you persuade him to go away? The longer he stays the worse it will be for him at last. It is only staying to be miserable.’

“Henry smiled, and said, ‘I am sure my brother would not wish to do that.’

“‘Then you will persuade him to go away?’

“‘Persuasion is not at command; but pardon me if I cannot even endeavour to persuade him. I have myself told him that Miss Thorpe is engaged. He knows what he is about, and must be his own master.’

“‘No, he does not know what he is about,’ cried Catherine; ‘he does not know the pain he is giving my brother. Not that James has ever told me so, but I am sure he is very uncomfortable.’

“‘And are you sure it is my brother’s doing?’

“‘Yes, very sure.’

“‘Is it my brother’s attentions to Miss Thorpe, or Miss Thorpe’s admission of them, that gives the pain?’”

Catherine, in her ignorance of the ways of the world, wonders General Tilney does not interfere; is sure if *he* spoke to Captain Tilney he would go away.

Henry Tilney has some trouble in convincing her that her “amiable solicitude” is a little mistaken. Will her brother thank her, either on his own account or on that of Miss Thorpe, for supposing that her affection, or at least her good behaviour, can only be secured by her seeing nothing of Captain Tilney? For anything further, Frederick must soon rejoin his regiment, and what will then become of his acquaintance with Miss Thorpe? The mess-room will drink “Isabella Thorpe” for a fortnight, and she will laugh with Catherine’s brother over poor Tilney’s passion for a month.

This is a novel view of the situation to Catherine, but she cannot refuse comfort from such a quarter; and she parts not only placably but affectionately from her friend.

III.

The bustle of the Tilneys starting on their journey is rendered trying by the exactions and complaints of the arrogant, ill-tempered master of the household; still he is all complaisance and sedulous politeness to Miss Morland; and his first fretful murmur at the chaise's being overcrowded with parcels, is professedly that she will not have room to sit. "And so much was he influenced by this apprehension when he handed her in, that she had some difficulty in saving her own new writing-desk from being thrown out into the street."

Luckily, the General drives in his son's curriole; but even the agreeable conversation of Eleanor Tilney, the bliss of their destination, the glory of travelling in "a fashionable chaise and four, postilions handsomely liveried, rising so regularly in their stirrups, and numerous outriders properly mounted,"* sink a little under the tediousness of a two hours' bait at Petty France.

The General, in his anxiety that Catherine may see the country, proposes to her to change places, and drive with his son for the rest of the way.

Catherine's recent experiences of such driving have not been encouraging, and she recalls an unfavourable opinion delivered too late by Mr. Allen, on the presence of young ladies in young men's open carriages. For I am glad to be able to show that Catherine, though extremely in love, has neither forgotten duty nor propriety in her love; but backed by the powerful sanction, even the recommendation, of such a judge of good manners as General Tilney, she feels she need have no scruple in giving the consent she longs to give.

Henry Tilney is as far removed from John Thorpe in driving as in everything else. The young clergyman drives so well, so quietly, without making any disturbance, without parading to her, or swearing at the

* Such was the style of travelling *en grand seigneur* last century.

horses, “so different from the only gentleman-coachman whom it was in her power to compare him with! And then his hat sat so well, and the innumerable capes of his great-coat looked so becomingly important.* To be driven by him was, next to dancing with him, certainly the greatest happiness in the world. In addition to every other delight, she had now that of listening to her own praise, of being thanked, at least on his sister’s account, for her kindness in thus becoming her visitor, of hearing it ranked as real friendship and described as creating real gratitude.”

It is a little drawback, certainly, to hear that Henry Tilney has an establishment at his parsonage at Woodston, nearly twenty miles off, where he has to spend some of his time,† but what pleasure under the sun is without drawback?

Unfortunately, too, as it proves, Henry Tilney, with his propensity for chaffing, cannot resist making game of his companion with regard to her expectations of Northanger Abbey. He conjures up for her benefit a fac-simile of the abbeys and castles of her beloved romances, and pictures her like Emily in “Udolpho”—conducted by an ancient housekeeper along gloomy passages—standing by a bed with its dark velvet coverlet resembling a pall—inspecting broken lutes and cabinets of ebony, while peals of thunder rattle overhead, and the flame of her lamp sinks in the socket just as she has been impelled to unlock the folding-doors and search through every drawer of the cabinet, and has come upon a roll of manuscript.

In short, Jane Austen, speaking by Henry Tilney, in the most barefaced and liveliest manner, parodies and makes fun of Mrs. Radcliffe’s romances, which she has

* What a quaint, pretty picture the young man in his coachman’s great-coat, the girl in her riding-habit and straw bonnet, which she is soon so anxious to protect from the rain, would make, taken as she stepped in or stepped out of Henry’s “curricule!”

† Even a good clergyman measured his duties differently last century.

praised so highly elsewhere;* and this example of the humourist's satire shows how free it is ordinarily from illiberality and harshness. She laughs merrily here at what she really esteems, the merits of which in another light she is the first to acknowledge.

It is not in a thunderstorm, but under the more prosaie inconvenience of "a scud of rain," fixing all Catherine's attention on the welfare of her new straw bonnet, that she arrives at her destination, with only a dim apprehension—from the modern lodge-gates, the smooth gravel of the avenue, and the Rumford grate and ornaments of pretty English china on the chimney-piece of the drawing-room, to which she is hurried—that the Abbey, in one sense, may not come up to her dreams.

The hall has been large and lofty, and there is a broad staircase of shining oak, up which Catherine is taken to her room. But that comfortable room possesses papered walls and a carpeted floor, while the windows are neither less perfect nor dimmer† than those of the drawing-room.

Catherine receives some consolation, as she is hastening to remove her riding-habit (the common travelling dress of the day), to dress for dinner, in time to suit the fiery punctuality of the General. Her eye falls on a large, high chest in a deep recess on one side of the fireplace. The chest, which is of cedar, curiously inlaid with some darker wood, and furnished with a tarnished silver lock, might have formed a treasure among the Queen Anne furniture and art curiosities of to-day; but it is not from premature æsthetic tastes that Catherine flies to it, entranced at the sight—it is because the chest looks like a realisation of her visions, a prelude to adventures in

* Mrs. Radcliffe, who appears to have been unable to stand a joke on her romances, even from their admirers, and who was much hurt by a laughing reference of Sir Walter Scott's in "Waverley," would have looked aghast at this levity.

† Revived mediævalism in æsthetics has changed all this, and gone far to banish again the garish light of day from "modern antique" houses.

her own person, such as those which her favourite heroines have encountered and surmounted triumphantly.

The incidents which follow the discovery of this chest would be impossible in the days of social science and board schools. They read like exaggerations, even in Jane Austen's usually temperate, as well as witty, pages.*

Then we must keep in remembrance that Catherine Morland was, in age, but sweet, immature seventeen, while George III.'s reign was in many things removed from that of Queen Victoria.

Miss Tilney's maid, and later Miss Tilney herself, surprise Catherine in what looks like burglarious intentions, in her eager investigation of the chest. In the last instance, Catherine has just succeeded in throwing back the lid, and discovering—a nicely-folded white cotton counterpane!

This anti-climax does not prevent the infatuated Catherine, when she has retired for the night, during an appropriate storm of wind and rain, looking about her, at intervals, in pursuit of more old furniture. And just as she is about to step into bed, her eyes light on an ebony and gold cabinet, such as her mischievous lover has described. To be sure the cabinet is not exactly of ebony and gold, but it is of the next thing to them—black and yellow Japan—with the yellow looking like gold. The key is in the door—wonderful to relate, as Henry has said! Catherine cannot sleep till she has turned it. Naturally, the lock tries her

* My impression is that Jane Austen began "Northanger Abbey" with the simple intention of executing, in accordance with an early amusement of hers, a gay parody on romances in general, and on one romance in particular. But her genius proved too much for her; and though she never entirely lost sight of her original design, she departed so far from it, by prolonging the Bath portion of the tale, as to destroy its unity, and make somewhat of a jumble of the whole book. On the other hand, the exercise of her great gifts, in their proper field of real life and character-drawing, has produced for us, instead of a clever burlesque for the amusement of contemporaries, a disjointed work of genius for the edification and enjoyment of succeeding generations.

trembling, unfamiliar fingers, but she overcomes its difficulties, only to open drawer after drawer with emptiness revealed. The middle cavity alone remains unexplored. She succeeds with the second lock as with the first, and meets her reward—a roll of paper, pushed far back for concealment, lies before her.

Catherine's heart flutters, her knees tremble, her cheeks grow pale. She seizes the precious MS. without a doubt as to her right to take possession of it. Has one of her heroines hesitated in similar circumstances? She glances round, as if by instinct, to detect the next accomplishment of Henry Tilney's predictions, in the waning of her light. It happens to be a half-burnt-down candle needing snuffing, instead of a lamp with the wick burnt to the socket. Sometimes modern prosaic substitutes prove convenient. Catherine has only to snuff her candle to restore its brightness. Alas! in her agitation she snuffs it out, and leaves herself at once in total darkness. Gas might not have served her any better, since gas runs the risk, in these circumstances, of being turned off.

Poor Catherine's plight has become lamentable, since, as a matter of course, she believes she distinguishes receding footsteps, and the closing of a distant door, the moment she has put out her light. A cold sweat stands on her forehead, the manuscript falls from her hand, and, groping her way to the bed, she jumps in, seeking some suspension of agony by creeping unheroically far underneath the clothes. Sleep must be impossible, and actually eludes Catherine's grasp till all the clocks about the place have struck three.

The housemaid's folding back her window-shutters at eight o'clock rouses Catherine to a bright morning and a cheerful fire. With revived spirits and curiosity, she waits only to be alone, in order to surrender herself to the absorbing interest and distinction of her discovery. She sees at once she must not expect a manuscript of equal length to those she is accustomed to read when printed. Here are only some small, unconnected sheets

of paper. "Her greedy eye glanced rapidly over a page. She started at its import. Could it be possible, or did not her senses play her false? An inventory of linen, in coarse and modern characters, seemed all that was before her! If the evidence of sight might be trusted, she held a washing-bill in her hand. She seized another sheet, and saw the same articles, with little variation; a third, a fourth, and a fifth presented nothing new. Shirts, stockings, cravats, and waistcoats faced her in each. Two others, penned by the same hand, marked an expenditure scarcely more interesting in letters, hair-powder, shoe-strings, and breeches ball; and the larger sheet, which had enclosed the rest, seemed by its first cramped line—"To poultice chesnut mare"—a farrier's bill! Such was the collection of papers (left, perhaps, as she could then suppose, by the negligence of a servant, in the place whence she had taken them) which had filled her with expectation and alarm, and had robbed her of half her night's rest! She felt humbled to the dust."

Catherine fervently trusts that nobody—above all, not Henry Tilney, who is in some respects the originator of her misadventure, but whom, of course, she magnanimously forgives—will ever learn what she has been about.

She soon forgets her affronted discomfiture in a little conversation with Henry Tilney, in the breakfast-parlour, before the others come down. She is praising Miss Tilney's hyacinths, and adds, "I have just learnt to love a hyacinth."

"And how might you learn? By accident, or argument?"

"Your sister taught me: I cannot tell how. Mrs. Allen used to take pains, year after year, to make me like them; but I never could, till I saw them, the other day, in Milsom Street. I am naturally indifferent about flowers."*

* What a candid admission from a heroine, or from any girl! But to love flowers was not obligatory last century.

Henry Tilney ends the conversation with the assertion, "At any rate, however, I am pleased that you have learnt to love a hyacinth. The mere habit of learning to love is the thing; and a teachableness of disposition in a young lady is a great blessing. Has my sister a pleasant mode of instruction?"

I need not quote further than that Catherine is delightfully embarrassed, and that she has the happiness of being still more discomposed by a hint from the General when he appears, which does sound as if the formidable great man were deigning to rally the young couple on a sympathetic habit of early rising.

But Catherine is not yet quite cured of her romantic fancies.* She has been forced to see that the Abbey, in spite of its indisputable pretensions to antiquity and grandeur, its fine situation, and the ostentatious display made by the present owner of his rank and fortune, in its gardens and hot-houses, is, according to her standard, a mere commonplace, handsome, country house. She has found out for herself that old chests and cabinets may be no better than humbugs; still, she must hanker after family secrets and terrible mysteries. She cannot like pompous, despotic General Tilney, before whom his daughter trembles, and his sons grow silent—let him be ever so grandly polite to herself—not even though he seems to imply his gracious approbation, before it is asked, of his son Henry's suit, with the General's earnest desire that Catherine may accede to that suit.

Perverse Catherine takes it into her head that the General interferes to prevent her from being shown over the Abbey, and that he avoids certain parts of the grounds. Her rampant, over-stimulated imagination leaps to the conclusion, on the customary grounds, that

* Withal, one must be struck by Catherine's unworldly disinterestedness. She has given her love to a son of the house; but in place of taking the opportunity to ascertain and exult over the Tilneys' wealth and position, she is occupied with foolish romancing on her own account.

these suspicious peculiarities have to do with General Tilney's late wife, of whom her husband never speaks, who has died rather suddenly, during her daughter's absence from home.

Has Mrs. Tilney died a natural death? Catherine begins to question herself quakingly; or is she dead at all? Can her children have been imposed upon? May she not be secluded and imprisoned in some remote turret or dungeon, to serve an unknown purpose of her unworthy husband? In that case, Catherine must be destined to restore the unfortunate Mrs. Tilney to her children and the world.*

Catherine considers that she has a strong confirmation of her worst fears in what she is told of the General's habits of sitting up late, and walking up and down his room at night.

Before taking it upon her to act the part of a private detective in any more original or offensive manner, Catherine sets out one evening to enter secretly the closed room which Eleanor has pointed out to her as that in which her mother died.

Catherine goes into the Bluebeard chamber—which is certainly not kept locked—on tiptoe. “She beheld what fixed her to the spot, and agitated every feature. She saw a large, well-proportioned apartment, a handsome dimity bed unoccupied, arranged with a housemaid's care, a bright Bath stove, mahogany wardrobes and neatly-painted chairs, on which the warm beams of a western sun gaily poured through two sash-windows. Catherine had expected to have her feelings worked upon, and worked upon they were. Astonishment and doubt first seized them, and a shortly-succeeding ray of common sense added some bitter emotions of shame.”

She is endeavouring to retreat as quickly as she has

* I am able to conjecture, by the help of my own early studies, that Jane Austen is not foreseeing, and casting mockery on some modern sensational novels in this passage. She is simply borrowing from, and holding up to ridicule, a leading incident in the once popular romance of “The Children of the Abbey,” by Elizabeth Helme.

come. She has got as far as the gallery, when she hears footsteps approaching. It would be awkward for a servant, it would be dreadful for the General to meet her prowling about there.

Happily for Catherine, though she cannot think so at the time, it is Henry Tilney who comes running up the side stair.

“‘Mr. Tilney,’ she cries, taken by surprise, ‘how did you come here?’”

“‘How did I come up that staircase?’ he echoes, as much astonished as she is; ‘because it is my nearest way from the stable-yard to my own chamber; and why should I not come up it?’”

“Catherine recollected herself, blushed deeply, and could say no more. He seemed to be looking in her countenance for that explanation which her words did not afford. She moved on towards the gallery.

“‘And may I not, in my turn,’ said he, as he pushed back the folding doors, ‘ask how came *you* here? This passage is at least as extraordinary a road from the breakfast-parlour to your apartment as that staircase can be from the stables to mine.’”

“‘I have been,’ said Catherine, looking down, ‘to see your mother’s room.’”

“‘My mother’s room! Is there anything extraordinary to be seen there?’”

“‘No, nothing at all. I thought you did not mean to come back till to-morrow.’”

But he will not be put off the subject, and a few more skilful questions enlighten him with regard to her preposterously uncharitable surmises. Though Henry Tilney is the gay deceiver who has played on her imagination not so long ago, he is considerably scandalised at the length to which she has gone. After gravely explaining to her all the simple, natural circumstances of his mother’s illness and death, and of his father’s sincere affliction for his loss—since, though his temper may have injured her in life, his judgment never did—the son takes Catherine to task very earnestly,

if tenderly, for her most unwarrantable flights of fancy. "Dear Miss Morland, consider the dreadful nature of the suspicions you have entertained. What have you been judging from? Remember the country and the age in which we live. Remember that we are English, that we are Christians."

Catherine is punished. In the retirement of her own room she cries bitterly. She hates herself for her folly, and becomes a more reasonable woman for all time to come.*

IV.

Catherine is recalled from her compunction and mortification, which unquestionably Henry Tilney soothes to the best of his power, by the trials of real life. After nine successive mornings of looking in vain for letters, Catherine receives one from James at Oxford. It is a short, manly letter, full of pain, but full also of self-command and forbearance, announcing the breaking off of his engagement with Miss Thorpe, and hoping, for his sister's sake, that her visit to Northanger Abbey may be over before Captain Tilney makes known his engagement.

Catherine cannot conceal her sorrow for James, and is soon induced to tell what will not remain long concealed to her sympathising friends, Eleanor and Henry Tilney. Isabella Thorpe has given up Catherine's brother, and is to marry theirs. Both her listeners—Henry Tilney especially—are full of pity for Catherine's wondering sorrow that such fickleness and every-

* If Jane Austen be right—and she was a great judge of human nature—in the implication that an eager, enthusiastic young reader is impelled to reproduce in personal experience what he or she reads, and if modern sensational novels come to be *lived* by our young men and women, where shall we look—how shall we answer for the wrong done by our idiotic, noxious, light literature?

thing which is bad can exist in the world and make her brother James their victim ; but the Tilneys doubt that part of her information which relates to their brother. They do not dispute Frederick's share in the lovers' quarrel, but they are exceedingly sceptical with regard to Frederick's marrying Isabella Thorpe—a lawyer's daughter without any portion. Henry's incredulity is only shaken by the recollection of Frederick's former pretensions and confidence in himself, and by the fact that he, Henry, has too good an opinion of Miss Thorpe's prudence to suppose that she would part with one gentleman before another was secured.

Henry Tilney's humour asserts itself, as usual, through his vexation. He begs Eleanor to prepare for a sister-in-law open and guileless as the day. He heartily endorses Catherine's innocent argument—intended to be consolatory—that, perhaps, though Isabella has behaved so badly to the Morland family, she may behave better to the Tilneys—she may be constant to Captain Tilney.

“‘Indeed, I am afraid she will,’ replied Henry Tilney, ‘unless a baronet should come in her way ; that is Frederick's only chance. I will get the Bath paper and look over the arrivals.’

“‘You think it is all for ambition, then?’ inquired Catherine, at length beginning to see there were some things which looked very like it. ‘I never was so deceived in any one's character in my life.’

“‘Among all the great variety you have known and studied,’ Henry Tilney cannot resist saying. And really the masterful young lover makes game of his simple mistress so habitually, that one is tempted to imagine he is purposely testing the sweetness of her temper, and her freedom from pride and vanity.

He is soon rallying her on the loss which she herself has sustained. Society must have become irksome—the very idea of such amusements as she has shared with Isabella Thorpe cannot but prove abhorrent to her. Catherine would not now, for instance, go to a ball for

the world. She must feel that she has no longer any friend to whom she can speak without reserve, on whose regard she can depend.

But Catherine answers him very sensibly, and with a charming sincerity that disarms his mocking mood. "No," said Catherine, "ought I? To say the truth, though I am hurt and grieved that I cannot still love her, that I am never to hear from her, perhaps never to see her again, I do not feel so very much afflicted as one would have thought."

"You feel as you always do, what is most to the credit of human nature. Such feelings ought to be investigated, that they may know themselves."

We can easily understand how Catherine's spirits revive under this conversation.

The happiest episode of Catherine's visit to Northanger Abbey is her going with the Tilneys—the idea of the visit having originated with the General—to "eat their mutton" with Henry in his parsonage at Woodston. An abbey has become no more to Catherine than any other building. There is nothing now so alluring to her imagination as the unpretending comfort of a "well-connected parsonage"—something like Catherine's home at Fullerton, but better. Fullerton has its faults, but Woodston probably has none.

Before the visit, it has seemed to Catherine that the Wednesday when she is to go to Woodston will never come. She dreads the arrival in the meantime of Captain Tilney to ask his father's consent to his marriage. But no Captain Tilney makes his appearance, and all goes well. The day comes, proves fine, and Catherine treads on air. "By ten o'clock the chaise and four conveyed the party from the Abbey, and after an agreeable drive of almost twenty miles they entered Woodston, a large and populous village in a situation not unpleasant. Catherine was ashamed to say how pretty she thought it, as the General seemed to think an apology necessary for the flatness of the country and size of the village; but in her heart she preferred it to

any place she had ever been at, and looked with great admiration at every neat house above the rank of a cottage, and at all the little chandler's shops which they passed. At the farther end of the village, and tolerably disengaged from the rest of it, stood the parsonage, a new-built, substantial, stone house, with its semi-circular sweep and green gates; and as they drove up to the door, Henry, with the friends of his solitude—a large Newfoundland puppy and two or three terriers—was ready to receive and make much of them."

The General's hints and allusions, with his requests for Catherine's opinion and approval, which now become more conspicuous and significant than ever, may be embarrassing, but it is a delicious embarrassment.

Catherine thinks the house the most comfortable in England, and cannot hide her admiration of the prettily-shaped unfurnished drawing-room. "'Oh! why do you not fit up this room, Mr. Tilney? What a pity not to have it fitted up. It is the prettiest room I ever saw; it is the prettiest room in the world!'

"'I trust,' said the General with a most satisfied smile, 'that it will very speedily be furnished: it waits only for a lady's taste.'

"'Well, if it was my house, I should never sit anywhere else. Oh! what a sweet little cottage there is among the trees; apple-trees too! It is the prettiest cottage——'

"'You like it? you approve of it as an object? It is enough. Henry, remember that Robinson is spoken to about it. The cottage remains.'

"Such a compliment recalled all Catherine's consciousness and silenced her directly; and though pointedly applied to by the General for her choice of the prevailing colour of the paper and hangings, nothing like an opinion on the subject could be drawn from her. The influence of fresh objects and fresh air, however, was of great use in dissipating those embarrassing associations; and having reached the ornamental part of the premises, consisting of a walk round two sides of a meadow, on

which Henry's genius had begun to act about half a year ago, she was sufficiently recovered to think it prettier than any pleasure-ground she had ever been in before, though there was not a shrub in it higher than the green branch in the corner.

"A saunter into other meadows, and through part of the village, with a visit to the stables to examine some improvements, and a charming game of play with a litter of puppies just able to roll about, brought them to four o'clock, when Catherine scarcely thought it could be three. At four they were to dine, and at six to set off on their return. Never had any day passed so quickly."

Yet reflection might have suggested one drawback to the delights of Woodston. Catherine had already marvelled and even exclaimed when Henry Tilney proposed to go away from Northanger several days before the date of their visit, in order to make preparations for their entertainment at Woodston. How could he think so much trouble necessary for their dinner, when the General had particularly desired him not to put himself about, and had made a point of his providing nothing extraordinary? But Henry had only smiled, and started betimes for Woodston.

Now on the occasion of the visit, Catherine "could not but observe that the abundance of the dinner did not seem to create the smallest astonishment in the General; nay, that he was even looking at the side-table for cold meat which was not there. His son and daughter's observations were of a different kind. They had seldom seen him eat so heartily at any table but his own; and never before known him so little disconcerted by the melted butter being oiled."

Catherine might at least have foreseen that, however eager the General was to welcome her as a daughter-in-law, he would prove an alarming parent to visit Woodston in days to come.

The morning after the happy day at Woodston, Catherine is surprised by a letter from Isabella Thorpe,

which is so cleverly characteristic of that transparently designing and entertaining girl, I must give it all.

“ *Bath, April —.*

“MY DEAREST CATHERINE,—I received your two kind letters with the greatest delight, and have a thousand apologies to make for not answering them sooner. I really am quite ashamed of my idleness; but in this horrid place one can find time for nothing. I have had my pen in my hand to begin a letter to you almost every day since you left Bath, but have always been prevented by some silly trifler or other. Pray write to me soon, and direct at my own home. Thank God! we leave this vile place to-morrow. Since you went away I have had no pleasure in it; the dust is beyond anything; and everybody one cares for is gone. I believe if I could see you I should not mind the rest, for you are dearer to me than anybody can conceive. I am quite uneasy about your dear brother, not having heard from him since he went to Oxford, and am fearful of some misunderstanding. Your kind offices will set all right. He is the only man I ever did or could love, and I trust you will convince him of it. The spring fashions are partly down, and the hats the most frightful you can imagine. I hope you spend your time pleasantly, but am afraid you never think of me. I will not say all that I could of the family you are with, because I would not be ungenerous, and set you against those you esteem; but it is very difficult to know whom to trust, and young men never know their minds two days together. I rejoice to say that the young man whom of all others I particularly abhor has left Bath. You will know from this description I must mean Captain Tilney, who, as you may remember, was amazingly disposed to follow and tease me, before you went away. Afterwards he got worse, and became quite my shadow. Many girls might have been taken in, for never were such attentions; but I knew the fickle sex too well. He went away to his regiment two days ago, and I trust

I shall never be plagued with him again. He is the greatest coxcomb I ever saw, and amazingly disagreeable. The last two days he was always by the side of Charlotte Davis. I pitied his taste, but took no notice of him. The last time we met was in Bath Street, and I turned directly into a shop that he might not speak to me; I would not even look at him. He went into the Pump-room afterwards, but I would not have followed for all the world. Such a contrast between him and your brother! Pray send me some news of the latter; I am quite unhappy about him; he seemed so uncomfortable when he went away, with a cold, or something that affected his spirits. I would write to him myself, but have mislaid his direction; and as I hinted above, am afraid he took something in my conduct amiss. Pray explain everything to his satisfaction; or if he still harbours any doubt, a line from himself to me, or a call at Putney when next in town, might set all to rights. I have not been to the rooms this age, nor to the play, except going in last night with the Hodges, for a frolic, at half-price. They teased me into it; and I was determined they should not say I shut myself up because Tilney was gone. We happened to sit by the Mitchells, and they pretended to be quite surprised to see me out. I knew their spite: at one time they could not be civil to me, but now they are all friendship; but I am not such a fool as to be taken in by them. You know I have a pretty good spirit of my own. Anne Mitchell has tried to put on a turban like mine, as I wore it the week before at the concert, but made wretched work of it. It happened to become my odd face, I believe; at least Tilney told me so at the time, and said every eye was upon me; but he is the last man whose word I would take. I wear nothing but purple now; I know I look hideous in it, but no matter; it is your dear brother's favourite colour. Lose no time, my dearest, sweetest Catherine, in writing to him and to me,

“Who ever am, &c.”

But the upright, unsuspecting young girl who thinks no evil, is not a fool, and in this respect she has a great advantage over such female characters as the Amelia of another great humourist, Thackeray. It is refreshing to learn that the inconsistencies, contradictions, and falsehoods of that letter strike Catherine from the very first. "She was ashamed of Isabella, and ashamed of having ever loved her. The professions of attachment were now as disgusting, as her excuses were empty, and her demands impudent." "Write to James on her behalf! No, James should never hear Isabella's name mentioned by her again."

On Henry's arrival from Woodston, Catherine makes known to him and Eleanor their brother's safety, congratulating them with sincerity on it, and reading aloud the most material passages of her letter with strong indignation. When she has finished it, "So much for Isabella," she cries, "and for all our intimacy. She must think me an idiot, or she could not have written so; but perhaps this has served to make her character better known to me than mine is to her. I see what she has been about. She is a vain coquette, and her tricks have not answered. I do not believe she had ever any regard either for James or for me, and I wish I had never known her."

"It will soon be as if you never had," said Henry.

V.

The unpleasant sequel of Catherine Morland's visit to Northanger Abbey is, we trust, barely possible in our day. The unworthy resentment, unworthily vented on an innocent victim by an arrogant, worldly-minded man, foiled in his selfish schemes, and enraged at finding himself taken in by so shallow a conspirator as John Thorpe, may be common enough at all times; but, at

least, we live in a generation when men do not wear their tempers, any more than their vices, on their sleeves.

General Tilney has gone up to London, while Catherine's visit to Northanger Abbey is prolonged at Eleanor Tilney's request, with her father's full approval. The girls have been left alone one evening, by Henry's having found himself under the necessity of taking his curate's place at Woodston. They are about to separate at eleven o'clock at night, when they hear a carriage drive up to the door, followed by the loud noise of the door-bell.

Eleanor predicts the unexpected arrival of her elder brother Frederick, and Catherine retreats to her room in some discomposure. But her trepidation at the notion of encountering her brother's rival is nothing compared to her affright when, half an hour later, she discovers her friend Eleanor hovering about Catherine's door, in a state of extreme agitation. Eleanor is the reluctant, grieved, and affronted messenger from her father to the guest whom he has hitherto delighted to honour. General Tilney has recollected an engagement which will take the whole family away from Northanger Abbey on Monday (this day is Saturday). The Tilneys are all going to Lord Longtown's, near Hereford, for a fortnight. General Tilney has sent Eleanor, her heart swelling with sorrow and shame, to tell Catherine of a departure which, in the most unceremonious and unkind manner, compels her own.

Great and unpleasant as her surprise is, I am glad to say Catherine displays dawning dignity. She suppresses her feelings, speaks of a second engagement's yielding to a first, and declines to take offence. She will finish her visit to Northanger Abbey at some other time, and cannot Eleanor come to her? Happy thought! cannot Eleanor come to Fullerton on her way back from Herefordshire?

"It will not be in my power, Catherine," Eleanor answers briefly, in awkwardness and dejection.

Still Catherine continues resolutely cheerful. Let

Eleanor come when she can. Then Catherine betrays she is calculating on bidding another friend good-bye. She will be able to go when the rest set out on Monday, she says. It does not matter, though word has not been forwarded to her father and mother. The General, she hopes, will send a servant with her half-way. She will soon be at Salisbury, and then she will only be nine miles from home.

My readers must remember that the inconveniences of young ladies travelling alone were multiplied indefinitely, and even magnified to dangers, when girls had to go in post-chaises, or by coaches, over rough roads, and in a very deliberate fashion—largely affected by the merits or defects of the inns on the route, the horses, and, above all, the weather—even granting that highwaymen had waxed scarce by the close of last century.

Poor Eleanor has the still harder task of dashing these modest expectations to the ground. The General has sent his daughter with the unconscionably insulting and unfeeling message that Catherine must leave early next morning. Even the choice of the hour is not left to her: the carriage is ordered at seven o'clock, and no servant will be offered to her.

I am fain to think such rude insolence, such an ungentlemanlike and unfatherly breach of hospitality to, and consideration for, a young girl—his invited guest, his daughter's friend—could seldom have been perpetrated by the most irresponsible member of the old "quality"—the most selfish tyrant who ever figured in an antiquated army list. I believe General Tilney's action on this occasion to be one of the few-and-far-between exaggerations to be found in Jane Austen's earlier novels.

Catherine sits down breathless and speechless under the outrage. She can scarcely listen to Eleanor's earnest, humble apologies, her faltering explanations that her father's temper is not happy, and something has occurred recently to ruffle it in an uncommon degree.

When Catherine speaks, after she has put the one wistful, fruitless question, "Have I offended the General?" it is to say, quietly and firmly, that she is very sorry if she has offended Eleanor's father; it is the last thing she would willingly have done. She bids Eleanor not be unhappy; a few days longer would not have made any great difference. The journey of seventy miles by post will be nothing. She can be ready at seven. She begs to be called in time.

In short, Catherine behaves at this crisis with a simple self-respect and an absence of either rancour or frenzy which brings her out in striking and agreeable contrast to the rampaging termagants of later fiction.

But when she is left alone, poor young Catherine cannot so much as attempt to persuade herself that she has not been very badly treated, and that she is not smarting under the sense of the unprovoked ill-usage in addition to her own little private stock of wretchedness. For not only has the polite, high-bred General Tilney, who had seemed so particularly fond of her, behaved to her with gross incivility, there is the crowning misery of the knowledge that the false and barbarous General is Henry Tilney's father, and that she will not even see Henry to hear what he thinks of the cruel injustice, and to bid him farewell. Besides, what will her father and mother, the Allens, and the world think of the disgraceful indignity which has been put upon her, the bitter mortification to which she has been subjected?

But there is no help for it, and though sleep is impossible, Catherine can be as punctual as her friend Eleanor, who is up to do all that the most sincere affection and hearty regret can contrive, to atone for her father's conduct. Catherine may be unable to swallow a mouthful when she thinks of the last breakfast in the same room: "Happy, happy breakfast! for Henry had been there; Henry had sat by her and helped her." But she is able to decline decidedly, though tenderly, to write to Eleanor when Catherine finds that correspondence has been prohibited between the girls, and the one

letter, announcing Catherine's safe arrival, for which Eleanor entreats, must be directed under cover to her maid Alice. It is only Eleanor's distress at her refusal which draws from Catherine a promise to commit this single infringement of the prohibition.

At the last moment, had it not been for Eleanor Tilney's anxious forethought in ascertaining whether Catherine's purse would meet the requirements of the journey, the inexperienced young girl would have found herself "turned from the house without even the means of getting home." The necessary loan is quickly offered and accepted, but this realisation of the situation so overwhelms the two girls that they exchange their parting embrace in silence. Catherine forces her quivering lips to leave "My kind remembrance for my absent friend," but the reference is too much for her, and she has to hide her face as she jumps into the chaise and is driven from the door.

The only solution which Catherine can think of, for the unaccountable change in the General's behaviour to her, is too dreadful for her to dwell upon, though it has a serio-comic effect, as Jane Austen no doubt intended, on the reader. Can General Tilney have found out, by any means short of a tremendous breach of faith on the part of Henry or Eleanor Tilney, that Catherine has been so foolish and wicked as to suspect him of being a murderer, and is he now revenging himself upon her, almost justifiably, by refusing to let her remain in the same house with him, or to hold any farther communication with his family?

The real explanation may as well be given here. Catherine's one great offence in the General's eyes is that she is less rich and prosperous in every way than he had believed her to be. The fine gentleman is capable of the most mercenary efforts for the aggrandisement of his family. His greed has caused him to fall an easy prey to so vulgar a schemer as John Thorpe. In the days when Isabella Thorpe and her brother were ready to hail the probability of a double family alliance

with James Morland and his sister, General Tilney had chanced to notice his son's attentions to Catherine in the theatre at Bath. Being on speaking terms with John Thorpe, the General had not disdained to fish for some information with regard to the young lady's circumstances.

John Thorpe, in his vanity and bluster, had bragged his very best. He was not content with representing the Morlands' prospects invested with the brilliance which his credulous imagination and that of Isabella, stimulated by self-interest, had already bestowed on them, but added twice as much to everything, for the grandeur of the moment. "By doubling what he chose to think the amount of Mr. Morland's preferment, trebling his private fortune, bestowing a rich aunt, and sinking half the children, he was able to represent the whole family to the General in a most respectable light. For Catherine, however, the peculiar object of the General's curiosity and his own speculations, he had yet something more in reserve; and the ten or fifteen thousand which her father could give her would be a pretty addition to Mr. Allen's estate. Her intimacy there had made him seriously determine on her being handsomely legacied hereafter, and to speak of her as the almost acknowledged future heiress of Fullerton naturally followed."

General Tilney had not doubted the authority of his informant, and had shaped his course accordingly. He had been enlightened as to his mistake by the very person who had deceived him. The General had encountered Thorpe in town, when under the influence of exactly opposite feelings—irritated by Catherine's refusal, and yet more by the failure of an endeavour to reconcile James Morland to Isabella—John Thorpe turned, and not only coolly contradicted every word he had ever said to the advantage of the Morlands, he went as far in lying to their disadvantage. Mr. Morland was not a man either of substance or credit. He had not been able to give his son even a decent maintenance in

the contemplation of his marriage. The whole Morland family were necessitous—numerous, too, almost beyond example; by no means respected in their own neighbourhood; aiming at a style of life to which they were not entitled; seeking to better themselves by wealthy connections; a forward, scheming race. (I hope my readers admire the accuracy with which, in slandering the Morlands, John Thorpe describes himself and his sister, in fulfilment of the adage, that as we do ourselves we judge our neighbours.)

The horrified General pronounced the name of Allen.

Here, too, Thorpe had found out his error. The Allens had lived near the Morlands too long; besides, John Thorpe knew the young man on whom the Fullerton estate must devolve.

General Tilney had heard enough. He set off in a fury for the Abbey, to undo his own performance.

In the meantime Catherine is travelling home to Fullerton. “To return in such a manner was almost to destroy the pleasure of a meeting with those whom she loved best, even after an absence such as hers—an eleven weeks’ absence.”

“She rather dreaded than sought for the first view of that well-known spire, which would announce her within twenty miles of home. Salisbury she had known to be her point on leaving Northanger; but after the first stage, she had been indebted to the post-masters for the names of the places which were then to conduct her to it, so great had been her ignorance of her route. She met with nothing, however, to distress or frighten her. Her gentle, civil manners, and liberal pay, procured her all the attention that a traveller like herself could require; and stopping only to change horses, she travelled on for about eleven hours,* without accident or alarm; and between six and seven o’clock in the evening found herself entering Fullerton.”

* A period of time which would now suffice to take a traveller from London to Brussels with ease.

VI.

Jane Austen has here an excellent opportunity for one of her ironical paragraphs. "A heroine returning at the close of her career to her native village in all the triumph of recovered reputation, and all the dignity of a countess, with a long train of noble relations in their several phaetons, and three waiting-maids in a travelling chaise-and-four behind her, is an event on which the pen of the contriver may well delight to dwell; it gives credit to every conclusion, and the author must share in the glory she so liberally bestows. But my affair is widely different: I bring back my heroine to her home in solitude and disgrace, and no sweet elation of spirits can lead me into minuteness. A heroine in a hack post-chaise is such a blow upon sentiment as no attempt at grandeur or pathos can withstand. Swiftly, therefore, shall her postboy drive through the village, amid the gaze of sundry groups, and speedy shall be her descent from it."

But the very next sentences are full of the warm human kindness of the humourist in opposition to the cold cynicism of the mere satirist. "But whatever might be the distress of Catherine's mind as she thus advanced towards the parsonage, and whatever the humiliation of her biographer in relating it, she was preparing enjoyment of no every-day nature for those to whom she went; first, in the appearance of her carriage, and secondly, in herself. The chaise of a traveller being a rare sight in Fullerton, the whole family were immediately at the window; and to have it stop at the sweep-gate was a pleasure to brighten every eye, and occupy every fancy—a pleasure quite unlooked-for by all but the two youngest children, a boy and a girl of six and four years old, who expected a brother and a sister in every carriage. Happy the glance that first distinguished Catherine! Happy the voice that proclaimed the discovery! But whether such happiness

were the lawful property of George or Harriet could never be exactly understood.

“ Her father, mother, Sarah, George and Harriet, all assembled at the door to welcome her with affectionate eagerness, was a sight to awaken the best feelings of Catherine’s heart ; and in the embrace of each, as she stepped from the carriage, she found herself soothed beyond anything that she had believed possible. So surrounded, so caressed, she was even happy. In the joyfulness of family love everything for a short time was subdued ; and the pleasure of seeing her leaving them at first little leisure for calm curiosity, they were all seated round the tea-table, which Mrs. Morland had hurried for the comfort of the poor traveller, whose pale and jaded looks soon caught her notice, before any inquiry so direct as to demand a positive answer was addressed to her.”

Even the soreness of the explanation becomes bearable because of the true fellow-feeling with which it is heard. Besides, though the Morlands cannot but be hurt and angry on account of the insult to their daughter, they are not naturally irritable people, and do not dwell on the injury.

“ It was a strange business, and he must be a very strange man,” soon become words enough to express their indignation and wonder. In fact, her father and mother are much too philosophic for Catherine’s feelings when she has to listen to such sentences as “ Catherine is safe home, and our comfort does not depend on General Tilney ; ” “ This has been a strange acquaintance, soon made and soon ended. And you were sadly out of luck, too, in your Isabella. Ah ! poor James ! well, we must live and learn ; and the next new friends you make I hope will be better worth keeping.”

Catherine’s great comfort at this time is in walking over to the Allens, to talk with Mrs. Allen over their never-to-be-forgotten visit to Bath. If Mrs. Allen is neither very wise nor very witty, nor possessed of any penetration to speak of—at least she mentions Henry

Tilney's name occasionally, and calls him a very agreeable young man.

For two days Mrs. Morland bears with her eldest daughter's restlessness and sadness, but on the third morning the mother remonstrates: "My dear Catherine, I am afraid you are growing quite a fine lady. I do not know when poor Richard's cravats would be done, if he had no friend but you,* your head runs too much upon Bath; but there is a time for everything—a time for balls and plays, and a time for work. You have had a long run of amusement, and now you must try to be useful."

Catherine took up her work directly, saying, in a dejected voice, that her head did not run upon Bath—much.

"Then you are fretting about General Tilney, and that is very simple of you; for ten to one whether you ever see him again. You should never fret about trifles." After a short silence, "I hope, my Catherine, you are not getting out of humour with home, because it is not so grand as Northanger; that would be turning your visit into an evil, indeed. Wherever you are, you should always be contented, but especially at home, because there you must spend the most of your time. I did not quite like, at breakfast, to hear you talk so much about the French bread at Northanger."

"I am sure I do not care about the bread. It is all the same to me what I eat."

"There is a very clever essay in one of the books upstairs upon much such a subject—about young girls who have been spoilt for home by great acquaintance—the 'Mirror,' I think—I will look it out for you some day or other, because I am sure it will do you good."

Do sensible, kindly mothers still select such essays as those in Henry Mackenzie's papers, and bring them for their daughters to read, with a sanguine expectation that

* The Morlands were "gentlefolks," but that did not prevent all the fine stitching required by the family being done as a matter of course by the ladies.

the essays will answer their purpose? If not, is it because girls are less docile than they were wont to be, or because they are apt to imagine that they are considerably better informed than their elders, who have been in the world twice as long?

Mrs. Morland goes to fetch the work in question, but household matters keep the busy mistress of the family absent for some time. When she returns, she is unaware that a visitor has been shown in while she was away, and is surprised on re-entering the room to find a young man there she has never seen before.

With a look of much respect he immediately rises, and is introduced to Mrs. Morland by her conscious daughter as "Mr. Henry Tilney."

With the embarrassment of real feeling he begins to apologise for his appearance there, "acknowledging that after what had passed he had little right to expect a welcome at Fullerton, and stating his impatience to be assured of Miss Morland's having reached her home in safety as the cause of his intrusion."

He does not address himself to an illiberal judge. Far from comprehending him and his sister in their father's misconduct, Mrs. Morland has always been well disposed to both, and instantly pleased by his appearance, receives him with the simple professions of unaffected good-will, "thanking him for such an attention to her daughter, assuring him that the friends of her children were always welcome there, and entreating him to say not another word of the past."

He is not disinclined to obey her request, trying as the situation is, while the agitated, happy Catherine sits perfectly silent in the conversation about the weather and the roads, which follows, "but her glowing cheek and brightened eye made her mother trust that this good-natured visit would, at least, set her heart at ease for a time; and gladly, therefore, did she lay aside the first volume of 'The Mirror' for a future hour."

Then Henry Tilney, after a couple of minutes' silence, and an inquiry whether the Allens are at

Fullerton, with a rising colour, asks Catherine whether she will have the goodness to show him the way to her friends' house?

"You may see the house from this window, sir," is a piece of most malapropos information volunteered by Catherine's younger sister Sarah, which produces only a bow of acknowledgment from the gentleman.

But good-natured, considerate Mrs. Morland comes to his aid. She sincerely pities his painful position, and believes he may have something to say, on his father's account, which will be more easily said to Catherine alone. She sends away the couple together to the Allens.

Mrs. Morland is not entirely mistaken. Henry Tilney has some explanations to give on his father's behalf, but "his first purpose was to explain himself, and before they reached Mr. Allen's grounds he had done it so well that Catherine did not think it could ever be repeated too often."

Jane Austen thus coolly defines the lovers' relations:—Catherine "was assured of his affections, and that heart in return was solicited which, perhaps, they pretty equally knew was already entirely his own; for, though Henry was now sincerely attached to her—though he felt and delighted in all the excellences of her character, and truly loved her society—I must confess that his affection originated in nothing better than gratitude; or, in other words, that a persuasion of her partiality for him had been the only cause of his giving her a serious thought. It is a new circumstance in romance, I acknowledge, dreadfully derogatory to a heroine's dignity; but if it be as new in common life, the credit of a wild imagination will at least be all my own."

It is only after the pair have, in the formal phraseology of the day, "waited on the Allens," when Henry Tilney talks at random, and Catherine Morland, wrapped in the contemplation of her unutterable happiness, scarcely opens her lips, that she hears, to her dismay, from her lover what has passed between him and his

father only two days before. On Henry's return from Woodston to Northanger, the General had told him angrily of Miss Morland's departure, and forbidden him to think of her any more.

But if ever a young man is justified in acting in defiance of such a command, it is Henry Tilney. He has not only been encouraged in cherishing and displaying an attachment for Catherine, his father has in every possible way compromised his son, and bound him, in honour no less than in affection, to the young girl from whom General Tilney now seeks all at once, in the most unjust and despotic manner, to separate Henry.

It can be no matter to a young fellow who has never shared the General's mercenary motives, and who is possessed of the sentiments of a man and a gentleman, that his father has been misled, and has committed himself to the course he has taken under an error.

The father and son, after their meeting and explanation, have parted in serious disagreement, and Henry Tilney has repaired, on his own responsibility, to Fullerton. But he has considerably saved Catherine from the obligation to a conscientious rejection of his addresses, by engaging her faith before telling her what had passed.

Luckily Mr. and Mrs. Morland, when they are appealed to, and have got over their surprise at being asked to give their consent to Henry Tilney's suit to their daughter, are inclined to be moderate and indulgent in their views. Their parental pride and affection are gratified; they have not a single objection to urge against the young man personally. They recognise his good manners and good sense, and they are ready to give him credit for his good character. "Catherine would make a sad, heedless young housekeeper, to be sure," was the mother's foreboding remark; but quick comes the consolation of there being nothing like practice.

The one obstacle is, that while Henry Tilney's father refuses his consent to the marriage, Mr. and Mrs. Mor-

land cannot formally sanction an engagement. Their tempers are mild, but their principles are steady. They do not demand a great show of regard, but a decent acquiescence must be given. The General's money may go. Henry Tilney's present income is enough for independence and comfort, and he is entitled eventually, under his mother's marriage settlement, to a very considerable fortune. But he must at least have his father's countenance to his proposals.

The young people can neither be surprised nor can they complain, however much they may deplore the decision. They part for the time, hoping against hope for a speedy change in the General. "Henry returned to what was now his only home, to watch over his young plantations and extend his improvements for her sake, to whose share in them he looked anxiously forward; and Catherine remained at Fullerton to cry. Whether the torments of absence were softened by a clandestine correspondence let us not inquire. Mr. and Mrs. Morland never did; they had been too kind to exact any promise, and whenever Catherine received a letter, as at that time happened pretty often, they always looked another way."

The probation ends much sooner than might have been expected, and the cause of the General's yielding is the marriage of his daughter, in the course of the summer, to a man of fortune and consequence. This accession of reflected dignity brings on such a fit of good humour, that General Tilney does not recover from it till after the good, kind Eleanor has procured his forgiveness of her brother, and their father's ungracious permission for Henry "to be a fool if he liked it."

What renders Eleanor Tilney's happiness more complete is, that it is the prosperous end of a course of true love which had not formerly run smooth; the lover having only recently and unexpectedly come into the title and fortune which so recommended the match to the General, that he had never "loved his daughter so well in all her hours of companionship, utility, and

patient endurance, as when he first hailed her 'your ladyship.'"

Jane Austen adds with joy for Eleanor's sake, that "her husband was really deserving of her, independent of his peerage, his wealth, and his attachment, being to a precision the most charming young man in the world."

I must here point out another instance of Miss Austen's thorough independence of precedent, and of the popular verdict in fiction. I think it is also a sign how true-hearted and unworldly she was herself in the main, under the class prejudices which she undoubtedly held, that she should, in the reasonableness which she so insisted upon, indicate how lightly within certain well-defined limits she valued the accidental advantages of rank and riches, in comparison with mutual affection, and mutual and moral affinity. To her, certainly,

"True hearts are more than coronets,
And simple faith than Norman blood,"

when she makes her heroine, whom she loves dearly, while she laughs at her from first to last, marry with all her will a simple country clergyman and younger son, while a secondary character in the story carries off the peer and charming fellow in one.*

I desire to call attention to this significant treatment of her heroine because, in dealing with General Tilney's hectoring, grasping misdemeanours, though we are perfectly sensible that Jane Austen cordially despises the man, we are also conscious that his rank and position are made to throw a respectable cloak over his infirmities. Catherine is not caused to shrink from association with such a father-in-law, as she would have been represented shrinking from him, had he happened

* Concerning this gentleman, Jane Austen says, with one of her merry gibes, "I have only to add (aware that the rules of composition forbid the introduction of a character not connected with my fable) that this was the very gentleman whose negligent servant left behind him that collection of washing bills, resulting from a long visit to Northanger, by which my heroine was involved in one of her most alarming adventures."

to be a vulgar nobody, yet at the same time not more domineering, purse-proud, and mean than the well-born, well-educated General, with his oppressively artificial fine manners. Jane Austen was a born aristocrat, as she shows in many instances, but she was great enough to rise habitually above class weakness and narrowness.

The influence of the Viscount and Viscountess with General Tilney on the proscribed pair's behalf is assisted by that right understanding of Mr. Morland's circumstances which, as soon as the General will allow himself to be informed, they are qualified to give. "It taught him that he had been scarcely more misled by Thorpe's first boast of the family wealth than by his subsequent malicious overthrow of it; that in no sense of the word were they necessitous or poor; and that Catherine would have three thousand pounds."

This is a comfort, and so is the private intelligence which the calculating match-maker secures, that the Fullerton estate is at the disposal of the present proprietor, and therefore open to greedy speculation.

Accordingly, General Tilney permits his son to return to Northanger, "and thence made him the bearer of his consent, very courteously worded, in a page full of empty professions to Mr. Morland. The event which it authorised soon followed: Henry and Catherine were married, the bells rang, and everybody smiled; and as this took place within a twelvemonth from the first day of their meeting, it will not appear, after all the dreadful delays occasioned by the General's cruelty, that they were essentially hurt by it."

Jane Austen ends "Northanger Abbey," as she began it, with a little paradoxical mocking comment, fitted to bewilder stupid people.

"To begin perfect happiness at the respective ages of twenty-six and eighteen is to do pretty well; and professing myself, moreover, convinced that the General's unjust interference, so far from being really injurious to their felicity, was perhaps rather conducive to it,

by improving their knowledge of each other, and adding strength to their attachment, I leave it to be settled by whomsoever it may concern, whether the tendency of this work be altogether to recommend parental tyranny or reward filial disobedience." *

W Among the last things which Miss Austen did was to flatter the great public—unless, indeed, one considers that she paid it the highest compliment of all—by assuming it was a clever public, and must enjoy being made game of, to its face. A stupid public was not, and has never been, Jane Austen's public. On such her fine sense and abounding humour, pervaded by the true refinement in which neither the woman nor the gentlewoman is for a moment forgotten, fall absolutely flat. I cannot conceive such a public, which is ordinarily fond of coarse, crude mental stimulants, as appreciating and enjoying Jane Austen, though her consummate art as a story-teller may beguile it into dozing over her pages, or hurrying through them. But there is such a thing as having a good taste cultivated and not perverted, and budding intelligence may be drawn out, not stultified.

To those who are not by mental constitution impelled altogether into the abnormal school of fiction—to those who can read between the lines—reading Jane Austen will always be studying under a wise teacher, and keenly relishing an exquisite treat.

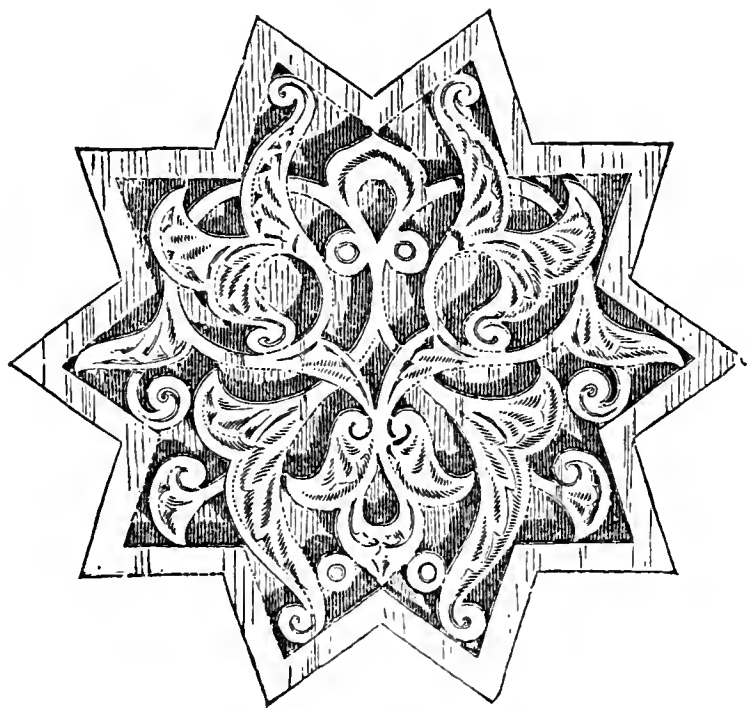
In some respects "Northanger Abbey" is among the author's masterpieces. It contains two or three of her most finished portraits. Nowhere is her writing more incisive, her epigrams neater, her wit at once drier and more sparkling.

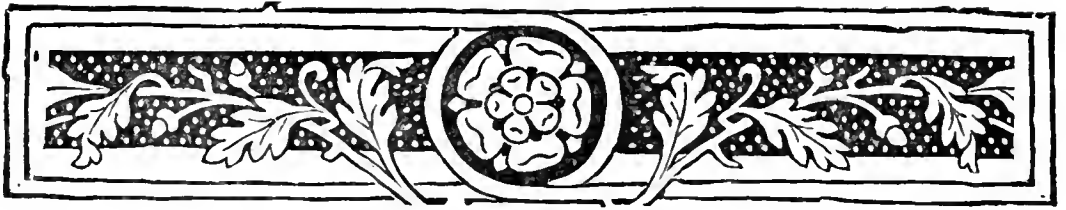
But "Northanger Abbey" has also blemishes which are absent from other works by the same novelist. It lacks unity; it does not grow out of itself in close sequence, like "Emma." Its different parts are so far inconsistent with each other, for strong realism and airy

* But "Northanger Abbey" has another moral—a warning against romance run mad.

burlesque do not match quite well together. There are considerable improbabilities in "Northanger Abbey"—above all, there is not a trace of the lurking pathos and pensive charm which blend with and relieve the humour of "Persuasion."

On the contrary, the almost incessant banter of "Northanger Abbey," excellent as it is in its way, has a certain hardness in it—perhaps, in this instance, the result of the unripe youth of the author—and possesses a tendency to fatigue and vex the reader who wishes to be serious for a moment—who regards the best of life and art as that which, in one fashion or another, reflects both life and art as serious and earnest.





EMMA.*

I.



EMMA WOODHOUSE, whose Christian name supplies the title to the novel in which she figures as heroine, is one of Jane Austen's lively, warm-hearted girls; but her personality is rendered quite distinct from that of Elizabeth Bennet by a thousand light yet significant touches. Emma's circumstances

alone would have sufficed, with the moulding power which such influences have in reality, and in the hands of a true artist, to shape her—always within certain limits—those of a well-principled, well-educated, essentially feminine girl, who is also a thorough lady, to different ends.

The novel of "Emma" is largely the record of the girl-heroine's rash blunders and errors; but to me it is instructive and comforting to find the faults, with their impressive enough lessons, not only so girlish, but always within the region, I may say, of an innocent, upright, kindly, well-bred girl, whose many failings lean to virtue's side. Emma Woodhouse is as incapable of deliberate undutifulness, dishonourable double-dealing, heartless levity, or disgraceful imprudence, and the coarse, evil-minded rubbing shoulders with vice, as

* Written in 1815-16.

I not only earnestly hope, but fervently believe, every God-fearing, virtuous, loving girl in any rank, in any nation, is to this day, however impudently and wickedly she may be travestied in the lower literature of her country.

Emma Woodhouse, at twenty-one years of age, is at the head of her father's comfortable, well-ordered establishment of Hartfield, in the village of Highbury, sixteen miles from London, where Emma's elder sister Isabella, who has been married for several years, is settled.

The two sisters are the sole children of Mr. Woodhouse, who has been a widower since Emma was a child. But her dead mother's place has been well supplied by an excellent governess, chaperon, and family friend, Miss Taylor, who marries and settles unexceptionably, with a worthy husband, in a country house at half a mile's distance from Hartfield.

Emma is introduced to the reader on the afternoon of Miss Taylor's wedding-day, left, for the first time in her life, to dine and spend a long evening with her father, a most amiable man, but a confirmed invalid, whose valetudinarian weaknesses and absurdities Jane Austen often makes irresistibly ridiculous—though all the time she treats him with larger-hearted, gentler consideration than is to be found in her manner of dealing with the foibles of the characters in “Pride and Prejudice,” and “Northanger Abbey;” for the very good reason, that the authoress, when she wrote “Emma,” was no longer the brilliant, rather hard girl, but the mature merciful, woman. Between the writing of “Pride and Prejudice” and “Emma” she had learnt a grand lesson—the acquisition of which, though it cost the labour of a lifetime, would be well worth the time and trouble—that of tolerance: “to make allowance for us all,” which is not the mere result of a facile, careless temper, or a secret fellow-feeling with the offender in his offence, or a low moral standard, but is simply the widened sympathy and

deepened comprehension, both of the better Christian and the greater genius. Thus Mr. Woodhouse is respectable and lovable, in spite of his mild egotism and foolish hypochondria; while Miss Bates—one of the gems of the book—is still more winning in her singleness of heart and inexhaustible contentment and charity, along with her shallow simplicity, thorough humdrumness, and boundless garrulity.

While her father is taking his after-dinner nap Emma contemplates, a little ruefully, the prospect of many such *tête-à-tête* dinners and long evenings. Yet though Jane Austen tells us plainly that the real evils to which Emma is exposed consist of her having too much of her own way, and being slightly inclined to think too well of herself, she is full of tender reverence and care for her father, in deed even more than in word. All through their history she considers his well-being as the first thing, never hesitates to make sacrifices to ensure it, and caters for his entertainment with the anxious, womanly forethought of a much older and wiser person. In the same way, though it is distinctly a disadvantage and stumbling-block to Emma Woodhouse—not only that the Woodhouses are the persons of greatest consequence in their social circle, but that the circle over which Emma reigns, far too entirely for her own good, is composed of the most commonplace narrow elements that can be found in any village or country neighbourhood—and though Emma wearies of it, becomes impatient of it, is guilty of girlish ebullitions of fretting and fuming where her engagements and acquaintances are concerned—still she never once behaves with the absolute insolence, hardly with the superciliousness, of underbred, ungenerous, self-engrossed youth, exulting in its passing advantages, spurning at what it can see of the defects and infirmities of an older, perhaps more incapable, and illiterate generation, while it is blind in its ignorance to indemnifying stores of homely wisdom and experience.

The claims of hospitality are sacred to the girl, and

she is always not only a good woman, but a gentlewoman. We are sure that such vulgar, mean words as "old frumps" and "old tabbies" have never soiled Emma Woodhouse's lips. Once she so far forgets herself as to prove guilty of being noisy and conspicuous at a picnic, and in the course of that indiscretion of publicly taking off and laughing at an old friend; but Emma does not require the sharp rebuke of the hero to be bitterly sorry for the offence, very much ashamed of it, and eagerly desirous to atone for it by all the kindness in her power.

On the evening of Miss Taylor's wedding-day, Emma is striving to chat cheerfully with her father, who, fond of everybody he is used to, hates to part with any one of them, hates changes of every kind, and matrimony as the cause of change, and keeps speaking of the fortunate bride with uncalled-for compassion. "Poor Miss Taylor! I wish she were here again. What a pity it is that Mr. Weston ever thought of her!"

"I cannot agree with you, papa;" Emma tries to arrest his lamentations, and to put the step which has been taken in the pleasantest light, by dwelling on the excellence of Mr. Weston's character and temper (Jane Austen is apt to bring forward temper as of cardinal importance), on Miss Taylor's natural satisfaction in having a house of her own—for how often they will be going to see her and she will be coming to see them. They must begin, they must go and pay their wedding visit very soon.

"My dear, how am I to get so far?" objects plaintive Mr. Woodhouse. "Randalls is such a distance, I could not walk half so far."

"No, papa! nobody thought of your walking. We must go in the carriage, to be sure."

"The carriage! But James will not like to put the horses to, for such a little way; and where are the poor horses to be, while we are paying our visit?"*

* What a capital picture, of an amiable rich man's bondage

“They are to be put into Mr. Weston’s stables, papa. You know we have settled that already. We talked it all over with Mr. Weston last night. And as for James, you may be very sure he will always like going to Randalls, because of his daughter’s being housemaid there. I only doubt whether he will ever take us anywhere else. That was your doing, papa. You got Hannah that good place. Nobody thought of Hannah till you mentioned her—James is so obliged to you.”

Mr. Woodhouse’s kindness and innocent self-importance are equally gratified by being reminded of this good deed. He is enticed to expatiate on civil, pretty-spoken Hannah, for whom he has procured an advantageous place—not the least of its advantages in Mr. Woodhouse’s eyes being, that when James goes over to see his daughter, he will carry her news of the family at Hartfield.

Emma spares no exertions to encourage the happier train of thought, and by the help of backgammon is sanguine about getting her father tolerably through the evening, when a frequent visitor, another near neighbour, walks in, and renders the backgammon-table unnecessary.

“Mr. Knightley, a sensible man about seven or eight and thirty, was not only a very old and intimate friend of the family, but connected with it as the elder brother of Isabella Woodhouse’s husband.”

Did ever hero enter more unassumingly on the scene? Was ever even the merest walking gentleman more succinctly or prosaically described? And yet George Knightley is a very hero of heroes, far in advance of Darcy in “*Pride and Prejudice*” where the highest manliness and generosity of character are in question.

I shall only pause a moment to remark that Jane Austen, in depriving Mr. Knightley of the bloom of youth, goes in the teeth of contemporary standards of age to which she herself paid deference in “*Sense and*

Sensibility," when she made Marianne Dashwood regard Colonel Brandon—a contemporary of Mr. Knightley's—as quite an old man, fitted for flannel vests and rheumatism.

To Mr. Knightley Emma starts an idea which has taken possession of her susceptible imagination, and which has a considerable influence on her later conduct.

"I made the match, you know, four years ago," she says triumphantly, in allusion to the topic of the day. "To have it take place, and be proved in the right when so many people said Mr. Weston would never marry again, may comfort me for anything."

Mr. Knightley shakes his head at her. He has known her from infancy, seen her grow up with all that is charming in her, only slightly spoilt. He has more than an old friend's regard for her, but he is also one of the few persons among her friends who sees her faults, and tells her of them—a process not particularly agreeable to Emma, and still more distasteful to her doting father; so that she has to assert stoutly, as if she liked the censure, "Mr. Knightley loves to find fault with me, you know, in a joke, only in a joke. We always say what we like to each other."

In defiance of Mr. Knightley's shake of the head—indeed, spurred on by it—Emma insists that she arranged the match from the day Mr. Weston gallantly went and borrowed two umbrellas from Farmer Mitchell's, and brought them to her and Miss Taylor when it began to drizzle in Broadway Lane. Emma boasts of the success of her scheme, and laughingly announces herself a future match-maker.

She does not go unchallenged by Mr. Knightley.

"I do not know what you mean by 'success,'" he says, and observes, with brotherly bluntness and irony, that her time has been properly and delicately spent if she has been endeavouring for the last four years to bring about a marriage—a worthy employment for a young lady's mind. Then he treats her pretensions

with smiling scorn, and alleges she made a lucky guess, which is all that can be said.

Emma argues that she promoted Mr. Weston's visits to Hartfield, and when her father begs in all sincerity that she will make no more matches, craves mischievously to be allowed one exception. "Only one more, papa, only for Mr. Elton. Poor Mr. Elton!—you like Mr. Elton, papa—I must look about for a wife for him. He has been here a whole year, and he has fitted up his house so comfortably that it would be a shame to have him single any longer; and I thought when he was joining their hands to-day, he looked so very much as if he would like to have the same kind office done for him! I think very well of Mr. Elton, and this is the only way of doing him service."

"Invite him to dinner, Emma, and help him to the best of the fish and the chicken," said Mr. Knightley, "but leave him to choose his own wife. Depend upon it, a man of six or seven and twenty can take care of himself."

My readers will observe that Emma is as disengaged and disinterested in making matches for her friends as if she were a young matron. She has not a notion of the incumbency of marriage on herself, as even Jane and Elizabeth Bennet felt it, to a certain extent, to be an obligation on them. There is no worldly necessity for it in Emma's case. She is the independent mistress of Hartfield, at the head of her indulgent father's establishment, and amply provided for in the future. Jane Austen's women, as a rule, are not too susceptible. Love and marriage for themselves are not the beginning, middle, and end of their dreams. They are quite willing to grant due prominence to other influences and interests. They would have blushed to have been engrossed by one passion, however lawful—even honourable. It is only because Catherine Morland is very young and simple that she is so entranced by Henry Tilney's attentions. As it is, had the couple been finally separated, she would have submitted to the in-

evitable, and been content in time without him. Fanny Price's devotion to her cousin Edmund is the habit of many years, and is largely made up of gratitude for constant protection and kindness. When Edmund Bertram's marriage to Mary Crawford appears certain, and when Henry Crawford is wooing Fanny with manly ardour and tender consideration for her difficulties, she is in a fair way—Jane Austen does not conceal it—for transferring her gentle affections from Edmund to Henry. The author's older women are fine, sensible creatures, capable of being useful and happy in all the relations of life. They can love, with what unselfish fidelity after hope is gone, Anne Elliot shows; but they are always mistresses of themselves, never love-sick—the poor puppets and slaves of passion.

Mr. Weston, Miss Taylor's husband, has been a widower like Mr. Woodhouse, and his son by the first wife is destined to play a prominent part in the story. Frank Churchill has been early adopted by a wealthy, childless uncle and aunt—his mother's relations—who give him their name, and are to make him their heir. He has been seldom seen in Highbury, but his praises have gone before him, and it does not diminish his popularity that he writes “a very handsome letter” to his stepmother, though he is not able to pay her a visit.

Within the round of Hartfield visiting—abridged, as it is, by Mr. Woodhouse's delicate health and invalid habits—are Donwell Abbey,* Mr. Knightley's seat; the vicarage occupied by the young bachelor clergyman, Mr. Elton; the houses in the village which belong respectively to Mr. and Mrs. Perry, the country doctor and his wife; Mrs. Bates, the widow of the late vicar, and her daughter; and Mrs. Goddard, who was the mistress of a school—not a seminary.

Jane Austen gives her view of the education of the period, which was in a transition state, in her definition of a school as distinguished from a seminary—not “an

* Are old abbeys so common in Hampshire that Jane Austen should have made two of her country-houses abbeys?

establishment, or anything which professed, in long sentences of refined nonsense, to combine liberal acquisitions with elegant morality, upon new principles and new systems, and where young ladies, for enormous pay, might bescrewed out of health and into vanity—but a real, honest, old-fashioned boarding-school, where a reasonable quantity of accomplishments were sold at a reasonable price, and where girls might be sent to be out of the way, and scramble themselves into a little education, without any danger of coming back prodigies.” These views were regarded as eminently sensible, moderate, and practical in their day; and no doubt there was, and is, some truth in them. At the same time, the general notion of education is narrow and prejudiced, to be held by so able a woman.

Mr. Woodhouse’s habits make him go abroad rarely, but he is fond of company in a quiet way at home, and Emma finds such company is best secured in the form of “tea visits” from such accommodating old neighbours as the Bateses and Mrs. Goddard. She is delighted to see her father look comfortable, and very much pleased with herself for contriving things so well; but the prosings of the elderly and homely guests do not prove very congenial entertainment for the bright, clever young girl. Therefore she welcomes Mrs. Goddard’s respectful request to be allowed to bring a parlour boarder,* Miss Smith, with her.

Harriet Smith is a plump, blooming, blue-eyed, sweet-tempered girl, whose beauty delights Emma’s eye, while her innocent deference and gratitude, together with her unqualified admiration for everything at Hartfield—including its young mistress—touch Emma’s heart and flatter her vanity. She determines, in modern parlance, to “cultivate” Harriet Smith, who is to a great extent friendless, to improve her, to raise her into better society, and to make a companion of her.

* The habit, now gone out of fashion, of having grown-up parlour-boarders in schools, rendered them more like homes for young people of all ages.

Emma does not scruple to propose detaching the girl from the only friends she has—a farmer's family named Martin. Some of the daughters had been school-fellows of Harriet's at Mrs. Goddard's, and they and their mother and brother had been kind to her. These Martins are tenants of Mr. Knightley at the Abbey Mill Farm, and Emma knows that he thinks highly of them; but in her youthful aristocratic fashion she leaps to the conclusion that, from their rank in life, they must be coarse and unpolished. She will be doing a good deed to separate Harriet from her former allies, to whom the girl is so superior. It will be a delightful and praiseworthy task to improve and introduce into Emma's world this very pretty, modest young creature, who is, of course, to look up to her benefactress and attach herself closely to her.

There is a comical, often-quoted *contretemps* constantly occurring at these parties of Emma's. They usually end with suppers,* in which such little delicacies as minced chicken and scalloped oysters, carefully provided by the young hostess, are peculiarly acceptable to the guests, whose narrow incomes for the most part necessitate frugal living. But though poor Mr. Woodhouse would have made his guests welcome to anything and everything, his care for their health, in an egotistical reflection of his own experience, causes him to grieve that they will eat. "He loved to have the cloth laid, because it had been the fashion of his youth, but his conviction of suppers being very unwholesome made him rather sorry to see anything put upon it. Such another small basin of thin gruel as his own was all that he could with thorough self-approbation recommend, though he might constrain himself, while the ladies were comfortably clearing away the nicer things, to say—

"Mrs. Bates, let me propose your venturing on one of these eggs? An egg boiled very soft is not unwholesome. Serle understands boiling an egg better

* These old genial suppers have vanished, being crowded out of existence by late dinners, which are very different meals.

than anybody; I would not recommend an egg boiled by anybody else. But you need not be afraid; they are very small, you see; one of our small eggs will not hurt you. Miss Bates, let Emma help you to a *little* bit of tart—a *very* little bit. Ours are all apple-tarts. You need not be afraid of unwholesome preserves here. I do not advise the custard. Mrs. Goddard, what say you to *half* a glass of wine?—a small half-glass put into a tumbler of water? I do not think it could disagree with you.’”

Imagine the dilemma of the poor, baulked ladies, with their healthy appetites and the little treats laid before them, while the guests could hardly refuse the well-meant advice of the host.

But Emma comes to the rescue, allows her father to talk, but supplies the wants of her company in a much more satisfactory style. She is never indifferent to doing the honours of her father’s house “well and attentively.” Well-bred girls of Emma Woodhouse’s era would in her position have felt ashamed to be found “mooning” and self-absorbed, destitute of any sense of responsibility and thought for others. Nobody then described selfishness with enthusiasm, as an irresistible charm and crowning merit.

Harriet Smith’s intimacy at Hartfield is soon a settled thing. Emma does nothing by halves. As for the simple, docile girl whom Emma has taken up, Harriet is only too proud and pleased to be thus distinguished by the beautiful, “elegant” Miss Woodhouse of Hartfield.

Emma amuses herself by encouraging Harriet’s prattle, which, when it forsakes school-life, runs persistently on the two months’ holiday she had spent with the Martins at Abbey Mill Farm. At first Harriet is in blissful ignorance of the social inferiority of the Farm, and talks with exultation of the two parlours—one of them quite as large as Mrs. Goddard’s drawing-room; the upper maid, who had lived five-and-twenty years with Mrs. Martin; the eight cows—one of

them a little Welsh cow, a very pretty little Welsh cow, of which Harriet had been so fond Mrs. Martin had said it should be called *her* cow; and the handsome summer-house in the garden, in which, some day next year, they are all to drink tea. And Harriet, after a little encouragement, shows no dislike to talk of the young farmer who is the master of the house. He has shared in the moonlight walks and merry games of his sisters and their friend. "He had gone three miles round one day in order to bring her some walnuts because she had said how fond she was of them, and in everything else he was so very obliging. He had his shepherd's son into the parlour one night on purpose to sing to her. She was very fond of singing. He could sing a little himself. She believed he was very clever, and understood everything. He had a very fine flock, and while she was with them he had been bid more for his wool than anybody in the county. She believed everybody spoke well of him. His mother and sisters were very fond of him. Mrs. Martin had told her one day (there was a blush as she said it) that it was impossible for anybody to be a better son, and therefore she was sure whenever he married, he would make a good husband. Not that she *wanted* him to marry. She was in no hurry at all."

"Well done, Mrs. Martin," thought Emma; "you know what you are about."

"And when she had come away Mrs. Martin was so very kind as to send Mrs. Goddard a beautiful goose—the finest goose Mrs. Goddard had ever seen. Mrs. Goddard had dressed it on a Sunday, and asked all the three teachers—Miss Nash, and Miss Prince, and Miss Richardson—to sup with her."

"Mr. Martin, I suppose, is not a man of information beyond the line of his own business. He does not read?"

"Oh, yes—that is, no—I do not know, but I believe he has read a good deal, but not what you would think anything of. He reads the agricultural reports,

and some other books that lie in one of the window-seats, but he reads all *them* to himself. But sometimes of an evening, before we went to cards, he would read something aloud out of 'Elegant Extracts,' very entertaining. And I know he has read the 'Vicar of Wakefield.' He never read the 'Romance of the Forest,' nor 'The Children of the Abbey.' He had never heard of such books before I mentioned them, but he is determined to get them now, as soon as ever he can."

Emma sets herself to change all these cordial relations with the Martins, above all the appreciation of young Martin, in which she sees special danger for her *protégée*.

Emma begins by gently "setting down" Harriet as to the position of yeomen, and the improbability of her—Emma Woodhouse—having noticed one of them, since Harriet supposes Miss Woodhouse must have seen and known Robert Martin when he rode to market. On the occasion of an accidental encounter between the young farmer and the two girls, Emma takes care to let Harriet perceive that she thinks the young man very plain and clownish in his air. Emma makes Harriet contrast his lack of "gentility"—which, by the way, was not so odious a word last century—with the well-bred manners of Mr. Elton, among others of their acquaintance.

In fact, it is for the young vicar that Emma destines her friend; and in order to bring about an attachment and marriage, which she considers will be advantageous to both, Emma encourages Mr. Elton to spend many of his disengaged evenings at Hartfield, where she has always Harriet Smith with her. The young mistress of the house is altogether oblivious of the fact that the gentleman who, though well enough disposed, is by no means without self-love, and a head which is liable to be turned, may altogether mistake her graciousness.

Mr. Knightley does not approve of the great intimacy between Emma and Harriet Smith. There is no

use in Mrs. Weston, Emma's attached old friend, urging that it may induce Emma to read more; as she wishes to see Harriet better informed, the girls will read together.

"Emma has been meaning to read more ever since she was twelve years old. I have seen a great many lists of her drawing up, at various times, of books that she meant to read regularly through—and very good lists they were, very well chosen, and neatly arranged—sometimes alphabetically, and sometimes by some other rule. The list she drew up when only fourteen, I remember thinking it did her judgment so much credit, that I preserved it some time, and I dare say she may have made out a very good list now. But I have done with expecting a course of steady reading from Emma."

Mr. Knightley adds his estimate of the pretty, popular girl. "Emma is spoiled by being the cleverest of her family. At ten years' old she had the misfortune of being able to answer questions which puzzled her sister at seventeen. She was always quick and assured, Isabella slow and diffident. And ever since she was twelve, Emma has been mistress of the house, and of you all."

He inveighs against the unsuitable friendship between Emma and Harriet Smith, as sure to be injurious to both. Harriet is an unconscious flatterer. Her ignorance is in itself hourly flattery. On the other hand, Hartfield will put Harriet out of conceit with her natural sphere. She will only grow refined enough to be uncomfortable among the people with whom her lot is cast.

In the middle of their argument, the two friends break off the dispute to agree in their affectionate admiration of Emma's person. Here is a graphic and charming picture of the heroine, which removes her attractions far out of the category of what is sickly and fantastic:—"Such an eye! the true hazel eye—and so brilliant! regular features, open countenance, with a complexion—oh, what a bloom of full health! and such a pretty height and size! such a firm and upright figure! There is health not merely in her bloom, but

in her air, her head, her glance. One hears something of a child's being 'the picture of health;' now, Emma always gives me the idea of being the complete picture of grown-up health."

Yes, indeed, that is what every girl—plain or handsome, should desire to be, for her own good and that of all connected with her. In a summary of the bountiful gifts bestowed on the late Catherine Tait, wife of the Archbishop of Canterbury, what were reckoned as not the least were the health and strength, beyond those of ordinary women, which fitted her for the worthy performance of her many and arduous duties. Will girls never lay the lesson to heart in time, before they so often fritter and fling away, by culpable neglect and recklessness, one of God's greatest boons?

Mr. Knightley returns to the charge of the mischievous association of the girls, until he stirs up Mrs. Weston to protest, with regard to Emma: "Where shall we see a better daughter, a kinder sister, a truer friend?"

"Very well," he answers, "I will not plague you any more. Emma shall be an angel, and I will keep my spleen to myself till Christmas brings John and Isabella. John loves Emma with a reasonable and therefore not a blind affection; and Isabella always thinks as he does, except when he is not quite frightened enough about the children. I am sure of having their opinions with me."

"I have a very sincere interest in Emma," Mr. Knightley repeats. "Isabella does not seem more my sister; has never excited a greater interest; perhaps, hardly so great. There is an anxiety, a curiosity in what one feels for Emma. I wonder what will become of her?"

"So do I," said Mrs. Weston gently, "very much."

"She always declares she will never marry, which, of course, means just nothing at all. But I have no idea that she has yet ever seen a man she cared for. It would not be a bad thing for her to be very much in

love, with a proper object. I should like to see Emma in love, and in some doubt of a return; it would do her good. But there is nobody hereabouts to attract her; and she goes so seldom from home."

"There does, indeed, seem as little to tempt her to break her resolution at present," says Mrs. Weston, "as can well be."

The truth is, Mrs. Weston and her husband have a pet plan for their favourite Emma, which is not to be disclosed prematurely.

Emma paints Harriet's miniature, and Mr. Elton lends all the help of his advice, while complimenting Miss Woodhouse on her talent for drawing, which she regards as his gratitude on Harriet's account.

Emma takes care to fix upon Mr. Elton as the person with whom she can entrust her little picture to be conveyed to London and framed; while he shows a sufficient sense of her confidence. "He will suit Harriet exactly," reflects Emma, complacently; "but he does sigh, and languish, and study for compliments, rather more than I could endure as a principal."

In the meantime, Harriet receives a direct proposal of marriage from young Martin, couched in manly, unaffected terms.

Poor little Harriet, who is really as guileless and kind-hearted as she is simple and silly, is at first much and favourably impressed.

But Emma's influence, though she does not mean to exercise it unduly, causes Harriet, not without lingering regret, to resolve to decline the offer.

"I could not have visited Mrs. Robert Martin, of Abbey Mill Farm," says Emma, and Harriet is fixed in her resolve.

"That would have been too dreadful, dear Miss Woodhouse. I would not give up the pleasure and honour of being acquainted with you, for anything in the world."

Mr. Knightley comes in a happy mood to Hartfield, to tell Emma something that will please her about

her little friend, Harriet Smith. Though he has condemned the friendship, he can appreciate Harriet's girlish good qualities; he is even magnanimous enough to compliment Emma on having cured her companion of her school-girl giggle. Robert Martin has confided his attachment to his friend and landlord, who is eager to inform Emma that Harriet Smith will soon have an offer of marriage from a most unexceptionable quarter—Robert Martin is the man. Her visit to Abbey Mill in the summer has done his business, and he means to marry her.

“He is very obliging,” said the well-informed Emma; “but is he sure that Harriet means to marry him?”

“Well, well—means to make her an offer, then; will that do?” Mr. Knightley, “who had nothing of ceremony about him,” conceives that Emma is speaking from some scruple of womanly dignity as to his mode of expressing himself. He enlarges on the advantages of the marriage, and his satisfaction with it. He ends with the laughing supposition that Martin may be detaining Harriet in Highbury at that very moment, and she may not be thinking him one of those “tiresome wretches”—as Emma has just styled the Highbury gossips.

“Pray, Mr. Knightley,” said Emma, who has been smiling to herself, “how do you know that Mr. Martin did not speak yesterday?”

Certainly he did not absolutely know, but he had understood Harriet Smith was with her all that day.

“Come,” said she, “I will tell you something in return for what you have told me. He did speak yesterday; that is, he wrote, and was refused.”

Mr. Knightley is incredulous and indignant. At last he accuses Emma, with reason, as the moving spirit in the step Harriet has taken. “You have been no friend to Harriet Smith, Emma,” he said; and with equal sense and sincerity he contrasts Harriet with Robert Martin, to the advantage of the latter, and

remarks how happy the girl had been among the Martins, till Emma's injudicious interference.

In the hot argument which ensues, Mr. Knightley takes occasion to tell Emma that if she intends to make a match between Elton and Harriet, her labour will be in vain.

Emma laughs and disclaims.

But Mr. Knightley's penetration is not to be baffled, and he goes on to assure her Elton will not do. He is a good sort of young man, and a respectable vicar of Highbury, but not at all likely to make an imprudent marriage.

It is Emma's turn to be incredulous, though she will not admit her intentions.

The two part in mutual vexation, which causes a coolness between them for weeks.

Emma's pride is now piqued to accomplish her design; her head gets so full of it, that she is ill-judged enough to let Harriet see what she wishes and expects, and actually talks the foolish girl—who is, at least, perfectly unassuming—into a persuasion that she has inspired Mr. Elton with a passion for her, the belief in which is more than sufficient to create an answering passion in Harriet's soft, childish heart.

We have next an example of an old favourite employment with girls. Instead of the reading, which never went beyond a few chapters, the only literary pursuit which engages Harriet, and in which Emma, too, takes an interest, the only mental provision she is making for the evening of life,* is the collecting and transcribing all the riddles of every sort she can come across.

These were days when, in gatherings of young people even a little above Harriet in rank and education, the company in cropped hair and white frocks, in Brutuses and high-necked, short-waisted coats, played at such ingenious games as "The Traveller," and circu-

* We can, however, imagine Harriet's showing that book, with lingering pride and pleasure, to her grandchildren.

lated riddles for the general entertainment. A new riddle was quite a precious possession to a girl, nearly as good as a new song.

Miss Nash, Mrs. Goddard's head teacher, had written out as many as three hundred riddles, and Harriet hopes to have more.

Mr. Woodhouse is almost as much interested in the work as the girls, and tries in vain to revive old recollections of the excellent riddles of his youth, which always end in

“Kitty, a fair but frozen maid.”

Mr. Elton, who is constantly with the girls, is induced to furnish a riddle of his own composition—though, with the bashfulness of incipient authorship, he passes it off as a charade which a friend of his has addressed to a young lady, the object of his admiration—and he is gone the next moment. The charade is as follows:—

“My first displays the wealth and pomp of kings,
Lords of the earth! their luxury and ease;
Another view of man my second brings,
Behold him there, the monarch of the seas!

“But, ah! united what reverse we have,
Man's boasted power and freedom all are flown;
Lord of the earth and sea, he bends a slave,
And woman, lovely woman, reigns alone.

“Thy ready wit the word will soon supply,
May its approval beam in that soft eye!”

Emma reads, ponders, catches the meaning “courtship,” and happily confident that Mr. Elton is coming to the point, hands the paper to Harriet.

“‘That soft eye’ can only refer to Harriet,” thinks Emma. “‘Thy ready wit.’ Humph! Harriet's ready wit! All the better. A man must be very much in love to describe her so.”

Harriet's ready wit exhibits itself in not having an idea of the answer. Can it be “Woman,” or “Neptune,” or “Trident?”

Emma is slightly exasperated; but she takes pains to explain the riddle in detail, and to draw the strongest inferences from its subject, while Harriet beams and blushes with joy and confusion.

Emma now becomes as assiduous as ever Mrs. Bennet, of Longbourn House, showed herself with regard to her daughter, Jane, and her lover Bingley, in making opportunities for Mr. Elton to propose to Harriet Smith.

But lovers are perverse, and will not always avail themselves of the best-planned assistance.

In the course of a walk which Emma and Harriet chance to take past the vicarage, in which the girls are overtaken by the vicar, Emma, having discovered that Harriet had never been inside the house, perpetrates a *ruse* to enable her friend to see her future home. Emma contrives to break her boot-lace, then announces the accident, and asks Mr. Elton to allow her to go into the vicarage and get a bit of riband or string from his housekeeper to keep the boot on.

Mr. Elton looks all happiness, and is as alert in conducting the ladies to his house as can be wished. But though Emma retires with the housekeeper, and stays as long away as she can manage, she finds on her return that the two standing together at one of the windows, however friendly, are not yet an engaged couple.

Christmas brings Mr. and Mrs. John Knightley and their children to enliven Hartfield.

Mrs. John Knightley is a pretty, elegant little woman, gentle and quiet, wrapt up in her family—a devoted wife, a doting mother, and so tenderly attached to her father and sister, that but for those higher ties, a warmer love might have seemed impossible. She has inherited her father's delicate constitution, is over-careful of her children, has many fears and nerves, and is as fond of her own doctor in town as her father can be of his Mr. Perry.

Mr. John Knightley is tall, gentlemanlike, very

clever, a rising barrister. He is domestic and estimable in private life. But he has a cold, dry manner, and he is capable of being sometimes out of humour. He has all the mental clearness and quickness his wife lacks, and he can on occasions act an ungracious, or say a severe thing. He is not a great favourite with his sister-in-law. She is quick in feeling the little injuries to Isabella which Isabella never feels for herself. Perhaps Emma might have passed over more, had his manners been more flattering to Isabella's sister; but they are only those of a calmly kind brother and friend. However, his chief offence is, now and then, a want of forbearance with Mr. Woodhouse's peculiarities and fidgetiness. Mr. John Knightley has really a great regard for his father-in-law, but sometimes the younger man cannot resist delivering a rational remonstrance, or a sharp retort equally ill-bestowed. It does not often happen, but it occurs too frequently for Emma's charity.

Though such collisions do not usually take place early in the Knightleys' visits, one is brought about on the very evening of John Knightley and his wife's arrival.

Mr. Woodhouse and Isabella are very happy, expatiating on the merits of a basin of nice, smooth gruel—thin, but not too thin—and exchanging their little valetudinarian confidences, when, unfortunately, a reference is made to Mrs. Knightley's last sea-bathing experience at Southend, seeing that the two great medical authorities of the father and daughter—Perry and Wingfield—differ on the respective recommendations of Southend and Cromer.

"Southend is an unhealthy place," Mr. Woodhouse harps. "Perry was surprised to hear you had fixed on Southend."

"We had all our health perfectly well there," Isabella defends her side of the question. "Mr. Wingfield says it is entirely a mistake to suppose the place unhealthy. I am sure he may be depended upon, for he thoroughly understands the nature of the

air. His own brother and family have been there repeatedly."

"You should have gone to Cromer, my dear," insists Mr. Woodhouse. "Perry was a week at Cromer once, and he holds it to be the best of all the sea-bathing places. Better not move at all, better stay in London altogether, than travel forty miles to get into a worse air. That is just what Perry said. It seemed to him a very ill-judged measure."

John Knightley is able to stand this no longer. "Mr. Perry," he said, "would do well to keep his opinion till it is asked for. I may be allowed, I hope, the use of my judgment as well as Mr. Perry. I want his directions no more than his drugs." Then, more coolly, "If Mr. Perry can tell me how to convey a wife and five children a distance of a hundred and thirty miles, with no greater expense and inconvenience than a distance of forty, I should be as willing to prefer Cromer to Southend, as he could be himself."

"True, true," said George Knightley, hastily changing the subject, and warding off further danger, as Emma is accustomed to do. Still, Mr. Woodhouse is rather agitated by such harsh reflections on his friend Perry—to whom he has, in fact, though unconsciously, been attributing many of his own feelings and expressions, Jane Austen adds with a masterly touch—so that it requires all the soothing attentions of his daughters to set him at ease again.

Mr. Knightley of Donwell Abbey had joined the family at dinner. Emma had recognised his right to do so, and she had hoped that they might be friends again, for it was time their disagreement should end. She trusted their nephews and nieces would serve as a bond of union, and help in the peace-making. Accordingly, when he found her with the youngest, a child of eight months, in her arms, though he looked grave, and spoke shortly to begin with, he soon took the child out of her arms, with the unceremoniousness of restored amity.

The conviction gave Emma first satisfaction, and then a temptation to sauciness. It was a comfort they thought alike on their nephews and nieces, she said.

He was not unwilling to renew the old discussions half-banteringly, acquiescing in the mock humility of her assertion that, in their differences, she must always be in the wrong. Yes, and reason good, he said; he was sixteen years old when she was born, and he had the advantage of not being a pretty woman and a spoilt child. But "tell your aunt, little Emma, that she ought to set you a better example than to be renewing old grievances."

"I only want to know," said Emma, "that Mr. Martin is not very, very bitterly disappointed."

"A man cannot be more so," was his short, full answer.

"Ah! indeed, I am very sorry," Emma made the penitent acknowledgment; "come, shake hands with me."

This ceremony had just taken place with great cordiality, when John Knightley made his appearance, and "How d'ye do, George?" and "John, how are you?" succeeded in the true English style (which has not warmed much in the course of nearly another century), burying under a calmness that seemed all but indifference the real attachment which would have led either of them, if requisite, to do everything for the good of the other.

There could not be a happier creature than Mrs. John Knightley in her visit to Hartfield, going about every morning among her old acquaintances, with her five children, and talking every evening over what she had done with her father and sister.

The animation of the Knightleys' visit nerves Mr. Woodhouse to the exertion of dining out with them at Randalls; where Mr. and Mrs. Weston consult his comfort in every respect, by fixing an early dinner-hour, and limiting their invited guests to his family and particular set, including the elder Mr. Knightley, Mr. Elton, and Harriet Smith.

The incidents in connection with this dinner-party furnish a strange and unwelcome revelation to Emma's mind. In the first place, Harriet is attacked by a feverish sore-throat, and cannot form one of the party. Emma considers that Mr. Elton ought to make an excuse to be absent also—in fact, she is so obliging as to furnish him with one. She complains of the coldness of the weather,—wonders how any one would dine out who could help it. She and her father cannot disappoint the Westons, but there is no such obligation on Mr. Elton. She detects some hoarseness in his voice already. With the duties of next day—Sunday—before him, she thinks it would be no more than common prudence in him to stay at home and take care of himself.

Mr. Elton looks as if he did not know what to answer. He is not accustomed to contradict a lady, especially when her anxiety for his welfare is of the most gratifying description. But the next moment, a little to her disgust, Emma hears him accept with alacrity an offer from John Knightley, to secure him from any exposure to the weather by giving him a seat in their carriage.

The second shock to Emma is John Knightley's hinting that Mr. Elton's exaggerated efforts to please ladies, culminate in his desire to oblige Emma.

She laughs the idea to scorn; still, as coming from a man of her brother-in-law's judgment and penetration, it annoys her.

There is additional discomposure in her drive in company with John Knightley and Mr. Elton, while her father and Isabella occupy the other carriage, to Randalls. Mr. Elton is in exasperatingly good spirits, in spite of the tidings which Emma takes care to convey to him, that there is no abatement in Harriet's indisposition. He outdoes himself in blandness. John Knightley, on the contrary, indulges in a fit of ill-humour at being dragged from the hearth-rug at Hartfield and his children's company at dessert, and

growls in the most approved fashion over the folly of dining out, the whole way between Hartfield and Randalls—Emma being unable to afford him the sedative of “Very true, my love!” which, no doubt, is administered by his usual travelling companion.

Mr. Elton’s happy countenance and solicitous attentions haunt Emma all the evening, spoiling her pleasure, frightening her with the remembrance of John Knightley’s view of the case, which she herself defines as “absurd and insufferable.” In the drawing-room she is still farther offended by Mr. Elton’s asking her to *promise him* not to expose herself to infection in visiting Harriet Smith, and calling upon Mrs. Weston to support him in his entreaty. “So scrupulous for others, so careless of herself. She wanted me to nurse my cold by staying at home to-day, and yet will not promise to avoid the danger of catching an ulcerated sore-throat herself? Is that fair, Mrs. Weston? Judge between us.” Well might Mrs. Weston look surprised, and Emma feel too much provoked to be able to answer him.

John Knightley comes into the room with a cool report that it is snowing hard, and a caustic congratulation of poor Mr. Woodhouse’s spirit in venturing out with his carriage and horses in such weather.

Jolly Mr. Weston wishes that the roads may become impassable, to keep them all at Randalls.

Mr. Woodhouse and his elder daughter are in consternation. How can the chronic invalid face being overturned on the common, or the fond mother consent to be blocked up, for days and nights, from her children? (The country roads of last century were less trustworthy than those of to-day.)

Helpful George Knightley comes back from walking down the sweep and along Highbury Road, with the comforting assurance that matters are not nearly so bad as his brother and Mr. Weston have supposed. In some cases the ground is hardly white, and both of the coachmen agree there is no real difficulty.

Everybody is in a hurry to get off, and by John Knightley's forgetfulness in following his wife into her father's carriage, Emma finds herself, to her dismay, in the Knightleys' carriage, alone with Mr. Elton. She believes that he has drunk too much of the Westons' good wine,* and will want to talk nonsense. To restrain him, she prepares to speak with exquisite calmness of the weather; but scarcely has she begun, scarcely have they passed the gate, when she finds Mr. Elton actually and unmistakably making violent love to her.

Emma clings to the refuge of thinking her companion half intoxicated; disgraceful as the excuse is—above all in a clergyman—it was not altogether unwarranted by the lax practices of the time.

But Mr. Elton has only drunk wine enough to elevate his spirits, not at all to confuse his intellect. Emma, in her trepidation and vexation, strives to parry his addresses and to recall him to his senses, by an attempt at playful reproach. "I am very much astonished, Mr. Elton. This to *me*! You take me for my friend. Any message to Miss Smith I shall be happy to deliver."

But Mr. Elton repeats, with undaunted assurance and a great show of amazement, "Message to Miss Smith!" what can she possibly mean?

"Mr. Elton, this is the most extraordinary conduct," cries the distressed Emma. "You are not yourself; say no more, and I will endeavour to forget it."

Far from it, Mr. Elton resumes the subject of his passion, and presses for a favourable answer.

As Emma's notion of his inebriety yields to a conviction of his inconsistency and presumption, she speaks with fewer struggles for politeness; but her indignation is principally directed against what she declares is the contrast between his behaviour to Miss Smith during the last month—what she has herself witnessed, of his daily attentions,—and his present most unwarrantable

* The more convivial habits of the period peep out here and there in Jane Austen's novels.

profession of love to herself, which is far, indeed, from affording her gratification.

“Good Heavens!” cries Mr. Elton, “what can be the meaning of this? Miss Smith—I never thought of Miss Smith in the whole course of my existence; never paid her any attentions but as your friend; never cared whether she were dead or alive but as your friend.”

This is plain speaking from the compliment-paying Mr. Elton; but worse is to come.

“Miss Smith, indeed! Oh! Miss Woodhouse, who can think of Miss Smith when Miss Woodhouse is near? No!” in accents meant to be insinuating, “I am sure you have seen and understood me.”

It has all been a miserable mistake, in the course of which Emma has not only grossly misled poor, foolish little Harriet, Emma has also fed with false hopes the conceit and interested motives—rather than the honest regard—of a vain, ambitious man, who has been seeking wealth and worldly position as the first recommendations in a wife.

Emma is struck dumb, and when she says nothing her silence is still farther misinterpreted.

“Charming Miss Woodhouse, allow me to interpret this interesting silence. It confesses that you have long understood me.”

Then Emma finds her voice: “No, sir, it confesses no such thing.”

She tells him again in no measured terms how completely she has misunderstood him. Shaken and staggered as she is by his behaviour, she still goes back to her persuasion of his attachment to Miss Smith. Does he mean to say he has never thought seriously of her?

“Never,” cries Elton, affronted in his turn. “I think seriously of Miss Smith! Miss Smith is a very good sort of girl, and I should be happy to see her respectably settled. I wish her extremely well, and, no doubt, there are men who would not object to——Everybody has their own level; but as for myself, I am not, I think, quite so much at a loss, I need not so

totally despair of an equal alliance, as to be addressing myself to Miss Smith."

The smallness of Mr. Elton's nature is betrayed in his manner of speaking of Harriet at this time, as well as in many of his subsequent actions. He is not a fool—at least, not where men are concerned, like Mr. Collins in "Pride and Prejudice." Mr. Elton is altogether a better-bred man. But in this last specimen of a clergyman who is at once a coxcomb and a fortune-hunter, Jane Austen deals another blow at parsonolatry. One must think of Henry Tilney, Edward Ferrars, and Edmund Bertram, to understand how heartily she respected her father's cloth when it was worthily worn.

Mr. Elton is almost as obstinate as Emma, and hardly more flattering in reminding her of the encouragement he has received.

"Encouragement!" cries Emma, insulted by the word. "I gave you no encouragement, sir; you have been entirely mistaken in supposing it. I have seen you only as the admirer of my friend. In no other light could you have been more to me than a common acquaintance."

"He was too angry to say another word, her manner too decided to invite supplication, and in this state of swelling resentment and mutually deep mortification they had to continue together a few minutes longer, for the fears of Mr. Woodhouse had confined them to a foot pace. If there had not been so much anger there would have been desperate awkwardness; but their straightforward emotions left no room for the little zigzags of embarrassment. Without knowing when the carriage turned into Vicarage Lane or when it stopped, they found themselves, all at once, at the door of his house; and he was out before another syllable passed. Emma then felt it indispensable to wish him a good night. The compliment was just returned, coldly and proudly; and under indescribable irritation of spirits she was then conveyed to Hartfield."

It is a wretched business, Emma decides when she

has retired for the night, and her maid has curled her hair—in those days of curls—and she is left alone with full opportunity for the unpleasant operation of thinking. Such a blow for Harriet! That is the worst of all. Emma's conscience and heart are in the right place, though her wilfulness and self-confidence may carry her away; so her first thought is, "If I had not persuaded Harriet into liking the man, I could have borne anything. He might have doubled his presumption to me—but poor Harriet!"

Emma cannot spare any pity for Mr. Elton's disappointment. She has never been personally vain, as George Knightley noted, and she is shrewd enough to comprehend the kind of attraction of Miss Woodhouse of Hartfield, and her thirty thousand pounds, to Mr. Elton, the vicar of Highbury, without any connections to speak of, with only a moderate income, and nothing but his situation and civility to recommend him. She feels inclined at first to accuse him of double dealing in his manner towards Harriet and herself; and it is hard for her to be dislodged from the most sincere conviction that she has lent his forward advances to intimacy with herself, and his delusion as to her partiality to him, no encouragement.

But Emma's honesty is too great for her and her present peace. On looking back, she cannot help seeing how many incidents in connection with the miniature, his charade, &c., might have had a double significance. How far her own fancy had coloured looks and words; how much the wish had been father to the thought! Then, when she passes in review before her, her own constant invitations to Mr. Elton—the complaisance with which she treated all he said and did—her furnished-up apology for entering the vicarage, she blushes with shame at the misconstruction he might have put on such behaviour, and the sufficient though mistaken warrant she had afforded for such misconstruction. She heartily repents what she has done, wishes she had submitted to be warned by Mr. Knightley—almost

wishes she had consented to Harriet's marriage with Robert Martin.

It is a great relief to Emma when, by the time the snow-storm has ended, and Mr. and Mrs. John Knightley have returned to London, a ceremonious note comes from Mr. Elton to Mr. Woodhouse, announcing that he is about to comply with the pressing entreaties of some friends to pass a few weeks in Bath. His absence could not be better timed, and the unpleasant task of breaking to Harriet Smith his defection—or, rather, the worse explanation that he has never been her suitor—will be got over before he comes back. Emma is fain to trust that Harriet has not a retentive nature, and will soon forget her imaginary lover. But the match-maker is punished by Harriet's very meekness and uncomplainingness under the double injury—though it is some time before Emma recognises in her friend the weak tenacity of a nature which is feeble in its gentleness and guilelessness.

II.

Jane Fairfax enters presently on the scene. Jane is the grand-daughter of the old vicar, the daughter of a young officer who fell in action, and whose wife did not survive her loss. Their little child had been committed to the care of her affectionate grandmother and aunt, who, however, could only have afforded her the most slender advantages in the way of education, had a compassionate fellow-officer of her late father not stepped forward, and taken the little girl to be educated with his own daughter. Jane's home from childhood to womanhood has, therefore, been with the family of Colonel Campbell, and she has only returned at intervals to visit her relatives, Mrs. and Miss Bates, at Highbury.

The intention had been that the unprovided-for girl should be trained to render herself independent by teaching. But her friends shrank from anticipating what Jane Austen calls "the evil of Jane Fairfax's going out into the world to earn her bread." Farther on in the book, the author expresses still more decidedly, through her heroine, her pity for a woman in Jane Fairfax's position. These were the settled opinions of gentlewomen in Jane Austen's generation. We cannot now regard them as either very liberal or very wholesome, in the light of what has been developed of womanly independence, usefulness, courage, and cheerfulness. Most people of native spirit and intelligence, whatever their grade, would now be disposed to regard Jane Fairfax's position, after she was grown up, in Colonel Campbell's family—however good and kind they might be—as more detrimental to Jane's self-respect, more disparaging in the eyes of others, more trying in every way, than encountering the ordeal of working for herself among comparative strangers.

Another—what I must call weakness and prejudice of the gifted writer, is visible here and elsewhere. In dwelling on the superior cultivation and refinement of the more intelligent and polished society which Jane Fairfax shared, while she resided in the London house of a man of good position and large income, to what she must have submitted to in the village of Highbury, in the house of her excellent but poorly-educated grandmother and aunt, whose narrow means are in keeping with their confined interests, I think Jane Austen's aristocratic bias carries her too far in the line of mere superficial advantages. True culture is not so dependent on rank and wealth; and culture, though something, is hardly of such importance as she makes it. A rough diamond is a great deal better worth than a polished pebble. But Jane Fairfax is the diamond, not the pebble; so that polish is not wasted on her. She has a very pleasing person, a good understanding, and, what is more to the purpose, an excellent heart,

which is not injured by her undesirable circumstances. She does not learn to despise and undervalue Highbury or her homely kindred, in London, among her influential friends. She is a sort of heroine in Highbury, when she comes there on her periodical visits.

Jane Austen gives Emma Woodhouse's impression of Jane Fairfax, when Emma sees Jane, after two years' absence. Jane is very elegant, remarkably elegant (an exploded term of commendation often used by Jane Austen, when she desires to impress on her readers somebody's special grace and refinement); and Emma has herself the highest value for elegance. "Her height was pretty, just such as almost everybody would think tall; her figure particularly graceful; her size a most becoming medium between fat and thin, though a slight appearance of ill-health seemed to point out the likeliest evil of the two. Emma could not but feel all this; and then her face, her features—there was more beauty in them altogether than she had remembered: it was not regular, but it was very pleasing beauty. Her eyes—a deep grey, with dark eyelashes and eyebrows—had never been denied their praise; but the skin, which she had been used to cavil at as wanting colour, had a clearness and delicacy which really needed no fuller bloom. It was a style of beauty of which elegance was the reigning character, and as such she must in honour, by all her principles, admire it; elegance of which, whether of person or mind, she saw so little in Highbury. There, not to be vulgar was distinction and merit."

Yet Emma has no inclination, or only the most fleeting disposition, to cultivate Jane's friendship. The fact is, the two girls, of the same age, have all their lives been held up to each other as most desirable companions and friends, until human nature, in its waywardness, has rebelled against the obligation.

George Knightley has told Emma very frankly that she does not like Jane Fairfax, because Emma sees in her the really accomplished young woman that Emma

wishes to be herself, but that she has not the self-denial and perseverance to become actually. Emma, in her best and most candid moments, is driven to own there is some truth in this accusation. At other times she defends her bad taste in preferring Harriet Smith as a friend, by asserting that she—Emma—can never get acquainted with Jane Fairfax. “She did not know how it was, but there was such coldness and reserve, such apparent indifference whether she pleased or not; and then her aunt was such an eternal talker! and she was made such a fuss with by everybody; and it was always imagined that they were to be so intimate; because their ages were the same, everybody had supposed they must be so fond of each other.”

In the meantime Miss Campbell, with whom Jane had been brought up, though inferior to her friend both in beauty and accomplishments, has, as Jane Austen says, “by that luck which so often defies anticipation in matrimonial affairs,” engaged the affections and married happily, after a short acquaintance, a Mr. Dixon, a young, agreeable, and rich man.

Jane Fairfax is one-and-twenty, the age at which she had fixed, in her own mind, on beginning her career as a governess. The following are the strong terms in which the author refers to the step about to be taken:—“With the fortitude of a devoted novice, she had resolved at one-and-twenty to complete the sacrifice, and retire from all the pleasures of life, of rational intercourse, equal society, peace and hope, to penance and mortification for ever.” Surely this is exaggerated language, even for the last century, and reflects painfully both on the footing which governesses occupied, and on the qualifications deemed essential to gentlewomen, among our mothers and grandmothers. There is also an inconsistency in it where this tale is concerned, and one perceives that Jane Austen’s rooted class prejudices cause even so wise a woman to contradict herself; for in the beginning of the book we have an evident indication how much respected and

liked Mrs. Weston had been when, as Miss Taylor, she had filled the post of governess to Emma Woodhouse. No relations in the story are happier and pleasanter than those which are involved in the warm and lasting friendship between the two who had been formerly teacher and pupil. Why might not Jane Fairfax have looked forward to being another Miss Taylor?

Colonel and Mrs. Campbell's good sense had led them to acquiesce in Jane Fairfax's determination, loth as they were to lose her company, and it was only because she had not been quite well, or in equal spirits for some time, that they had used their influence to induce her not to enter immediately on her arduous duties, but to spend the last three months of her liberty with her fond grandmother and aunt in Jane's native air, while the Campbells paid their first visit to their married daughter settled in Ireland.

Emma heard the first, not very welcome news of Jane Fairfax's coming, as she sought to get rid of Harriet Smith's dolefulness, and at the same time to do an irksome duty by taking Harriet to call at the Bateses. Mrs. and Miss Bates loved to be called on, and Emma knew she was "considered by the very few who presumed ever to see imperfection in her, as rather negligent in that respect, and as not contributing what she ought to the stock of their scanty comforts."

"She had had many a hint from Mr. Knightley, and some from her own heart, as to her deficiency, but none were equal to counteract the persuasion of its being very disagreeable—a waste of time—tiresome women—and all the horror of being in danger of falling in with the second and third rate of Highbury, who were calling on them for ever, and therefore she seldom went near them." But now she made the sudden resolution of not passing their door without going in, observing, as she proposed it to Harriet, that as well as she could calculate, they were just now quite safe from any letter from Jane Fairfax.

"The house belonged to people in business; Mrs. and

Miss Bates occupied the drawing-room floor; and there, in the very moderate-sized apartment which was everything to them, the visitors were most cordially and even gratefully welcomed; the quiet, neat old lady, who, with her knitting, was seated in the warmest corner, wanting even to give up her place to Miss Woodhouse; and her more active, talking daughter almost ready to overpower them with care and kindness, thanks for their visit, solicitude for their shoes, anxious inquiries after Mr. Woodhouse's health, cheerful communications about her mother's, and sweet cake from the buffet."

Emma had argued without her host, as she soon hears from Miss Bates, who prattles with the delightful *abandon* of the most innocent, unsuspecting heart, in company with the most honest thick head in the world. She rambles, breaks off, diverges right and left in her monologues, as only a very talkative, simple-minded, elderly woman—a Mrs. Nickleby or a Miss Bates—can wander, pull herself up, and start afresh in her conversation. Miss Bates has only just finished reading a letter from her niece to a previous visitor, and, of course, mentions what she has been about.

"Emma's politeness was at hand directly, to say, with smiling interest, 'Have you heard from Miss Fairfax so lately? I am extremely happy. I hope she is well?'"

"'Thank you, you are so kind!' replied the happily-deceived aunt, while eagerly hunting for the letter. 'Oh, here it is! I was sure it could not be far off; but I had put my huswife upon it, you see, without being aware, and so it was quite hid, but I had it in my hand so very lately that I was almost sure it must be on the table. I was reading it to Mrs. Cole, and since she went away I was reading it again to my mother, for it is such a pleasure to her—a letter from Jane—that she can never hear it often enough; so I knew it could not be far off, and here it is, only put under my huswife; and since you are so kind as to wish to hear what she says—— But first of all I really must,

in justice to Jane, apologise for her writing so short a letter, only two pages you see, hardly two, and in general she fills the whole paper and crosses half. My mother often wonders that I can make it out so well. She often says, when the letter is first opened, "Well, Hetty, now I think you will be put to it to make out all that checker-work"—don't you, ma'am? And then I tell her I am sure she would contrive to make it out for herself, if she had nobody to do it for her, every word of it. I am sure she would pore over it till she had made out every word. And, indeed, though my mother's eyes are not so good as they were, she can see amazingly well still, thank God! with the help of spectacles. It is such a blessing! My mother's are really very good indeed. Jane often says when she is here, 'I am sure, grandmamma, you must have had very strong eyes to see as you do, and so much fine work as you have done too! I only wish my eyes may last me as well.'

"All this spoken extremely fast, obliged Miss Bates to stop for breath; and Emma said something civil about the excellence of Miss Fairfax's handwriting.

"'You are extremely kind,' replied Miss Bates, highly gratified, 'you who are such a judge, and write so beautifully yourself. I am sure there is nobody's praise that could give us so much pleasure as Miss Woodhouse's. My mother does not hear, she is a little deaf, you know. Ma'am,' addressing her, 'do you hear what Miss Woodhouse is so obliging as to say about Jane's handwriting?'

"And Emma had the advantage of hearing her own silly compliment repeated twice over before the good old lady could comprehend it. She was pondering in the meanwhile upon the possibility, without seeming very rude, of making her escape from Jane Fairfax's letter, and had almost resolved on hurrying away directly, under some slight excuse, when Miss Bates turned to her again and seized her attention.

"'My mother's deafness is very trifling, you see,

just nothing at all. By only raising my voice, and saying anything two or three times over, she is sure to hear; but then she is used to my voice. But it is very remarkable that she should always hear Jane better than she does me. Jane speaks so distinct! However, she will not find her grandmamma at all deafer than she was two years ago, which is saying a great deal at my mother's time of life; and it really is full two years, you know, since she was here. We never were so long without seeing her before, and as I was telling Mrs. Cole, we shall hardly know how to make enough of her now.'

“‘Are you expecting Miss Fairfax here soon?’

“‘Oh, yes, next week.’

“‘Indeed! That must be a very great pleasure.’

“‘Thank you. You are very kind. Yes, next week. Everybody is so surprised; and everybody says the same obliging things. I am sure she will be as happy to see her friends at Highbury as they can be to see her. Yes, Friday or Saturday; she cannot say which, because Colonel Campbell will be wanting the carriage himself one of those days. So very good of him to send her the whole way. But they always do, you know. Oh, yes, Friday or Saturday next. That is what she writes about. That is the reason of her writing out of rule, as we call it; for, in the common course, we should not have heard from her before Tuesday or Wednesday.’

“‘Yes, so I imagined. I was afraid there could be little chance of my hearing anything of Miss Fairfax to-day.’*

“‘So obliging of you!’ the kindly soul took the words in good faith, and surely smote Emma's better nature. ‘No, we should not have heard, if it had not been for this particular circumstance, of her being to come here so soon. My mother is so delighted, for she is to be three months with us, at least. Three months, she says so positively, as I am going to have the plea-

* Disingenuous, mocking Emma!

sure of reading to you. The case is, you see, that the Campbells are going to Ireland. Mrs. Dixon has persuaded her father and mother to come over and see her directly. They had not intended to go over till the summer, but she is so impatient to see them again; for, till she married last October, she was never away from them so much as a week, which must make it very strange to be—in different kingdoms, I was going to say, but, however, different countries; and so she wrote a very urgent letter to her mother, or her father—I declare I do not know which it was, but we shall see presently in Jane's letter—wrote in Mr. Dixon's name as well as her own, to press their coming over directly; and they would give them the meeting in Dublin, and take them back to their country-seat—Ballycraig—a beautiful place, I fancy. Jane has heard a great deal of its beauty—from Mr. Dixon, I mean; I do not know that she has ever heard about it from anybody else; but it was very natural, you know, that he should like to speak of his own place while he was paying his addresses, and as Jane used to be very often walking out with them—for Colonel and Mrs. Campbell were very particular about their daughter's not walking out often with only Mr. Dixon, for which I do not at all blame them—of course she heard everything he might be telling Miss Campbell about his own home in Ireland; and I think she wrote us word that he had shown them some drawings of the place—views that he had taken himself. He is a most amiable, charming young man, I believe. Jane was quite longing to go to Ireland from his account of things.'

“At this moment an ingenious and animating idea entering Emma's brain with regard to Jane Fairfax, this charming Mr. Dixon, and the not going to Ireland, she said, with the insidious design of further discovery—‘You must feel it very fortunate that Miss Fairfax should be allowed to come to you at such a time. Considering the very particular friendship between her and Mrs. Dixon, you could hardly have expected her

to be excused from accompanying Colonel and Mrs. Campbell.'

"'Very true; very true, indeed. The very thing that we have always been rather afraid of; for we should not have liked to have her at such a distance from us for months together—not able to come if anything was to happen; but you see everything turns out for the best. They want her (Mr. and Mrs. Dixon) excessively to come over with Colonel and Mrs. Campbell; quite depend upon it; nothing can be more kind and pressing than their *joint* invitation, Jane says, as you will hear presently. Mr. Dixon does not seem in the least backward in any attention. He is a most charming young man. Ever since the service he rendered Jane at Weymouth, when they were out in that party on the water, and she, by the sudden whirling round of something or other among the sails, would have been dashed into the sea at once, and actually was all but gone, if he had not, with the greatest presence of mind, caught hold of her habit—I can never think of it without trembling—but ever since we had the history of that day, I have been so fond of Mr. Dixon!'

"'But in spite of all her friend's urgency, and her own wish of seeing Ireland, Miss Fairfax prefers devoting her time to you and Mrs. Bates?'

"'Yes—entirely her own doing, entirely her own choice; and Colonel and Mrs. Campbell think she does quite right, just what they should recommend; and, indeed, they particularly *wish* her to try her native air, as she has not been quite so well as usual lately.'"

The idea which has entered into Emma's idle, fertile brain, is that Mr. Dixon, while paying his addresses to the well-endowed Miss Campbell, may in his secret heart have preferred her portionless friend; that there may also have been an unfortunate hidden attachment on Jane Fairfax's part—one result of which is her disinclination to visit the Dixons.

Altogether, Emma's notion is neither very sensible nor charitable. But sensible and amiable conclusions

are not always to be expected from spoilt girls, who, with rather an overweening opinion of their own deserts, are not altogether indisposed to find fault with the alleged perfections of threatened rivals. My readers will long ago have discovered that caution and prudence are not Emma Woodhouse's strong points. Emma guesses as much herself, and on that very account is the more tempted to take a naughty pleasure in detecting undreamt of follies in that model of discretion—Jane Fairfax. But it is only by degrees that Emma is led on to the serious offence against fairness and kindness, of attributing anything more dishonourable than a rash, ill-judged bestowal of her affections, to Jane Fairfax.

When Emma and Jane first meet again on the occasion of Jane's three months' visit to Highbury, Emma is shaken for a moment, in her unreasonable dislike and unjustifiable fancies, till the old influences begin anew to work. Miss Bates is more tiresome than ever in her anxiety about her niece's health. It is affectation in Jane to praise Emma's playing on the piano,* when her own is so superior; worst of all, Jane Fairfax is so cold and reserved in her perfect good breeding—if anything more reserved on the subject of Weymouth and the Dixons than on any other, and Emma believes she knows how to explain this caution.

But neither is Jane Fairfax communicative on another topic which is of the deepest interest to all Highbury, including even Emma Woodhouse, who considers herself above local gossip in general. Jane Fairfax had met Mr. Weston's son, Frank Churchill, at

* In reading Jane Austen's novels one is carried back to the time when good playing on the piano, or "the instrument" as it is frequently called, was held, in the higher classes, as it is now in much lower grades, a crowning mark of a liberal education in a girl. Yet Jane Austen herself fell short of this attainment, and she almost invariably makes her heroines—as in the experiences of Elizabeth Bennet, Emma Woodhouse, Catherine Morland, and Fanny Price—either to have failed in the duty of practising, so as not to have acquired more than a moderate proficiency in music, or else to have been deficient in musical taste or deprived of musical education.

Weymouth, but not a syllable of real information can Emma get from her as to what he is like. "Is he handsome?" She believes he is reckoned a very fine young man. "Is he agreeable?" "He is generally thought so." "Does he appear a sensible young man? a young man of information?" "At a watering-place, or in a common London acquaintance, it is difficult to decide on such points."

Emma cannot forgive Jane Fairfax.

For Emma Woodhouse has a double source of interest in Frank Churchill. He is her friend, Mrs. Weston's unknown step-son, who has indeed written her "a very handsome letter," on her marriage with his father, but has not yet shown her the attention of coming to Randsalls. He is kept away, his friends agree, by the tyrannical whims of the aunt who adopted him.

Emma with her lively penetration has also seen, and that not with displeasure, in spite of her protest against marriage for herself, that Mr. and Mrs. Weston have fixed on her, as far as they can have any choice in the matter, for Frank's wife—nay, that all Highbury look on them as a predestined happy couple. Everything is so suitable—age, good looks, agreeable qualities, position, fortune. Emma does not deny these recommendations. No wonder she is curious to hear more of Frank Churchill.

Highbury is suddenly excited by the announcement of the approaching marriage of Mr. Elton, who has improved his time in Bath, and only returned to proclaim his happiness and prepare for his bride.

Emma is bent, as part of her atonement, on breaking the news to Harriet Smith, when Harriet comes in heated and agitated, crying "Oh, Miss Woodhouse, what do you think has happened?"

The blow has fallen already, Emma is sure, and prepares to bestow all the kindness that is due from her.

But the susceptible Harriet is occupied with quite another train of ideas. She has been shopping in Ford the

linendraper's, when who should come in but Elizabeth Martin and her brother, the first time Harriet has met them since she refused young Martin. She thought she would have fainted. The sister had seen her directly, and looked another way. When the brother found her out, there was a little whispering, and Harriet had guessed he was persuading his sister to go up to her and speak to her as usual. She had been in such a tremble; but she had seen that the Martins, especially the brother, had tried to behave with the old kindness and friendliness. Poor little Harriet had been conscience-stricken, yet comforted by his good nature.

It is in the middle of this comical counter-current of distress, which at last swells high enough to provoke and alarm Emma, that in order to put the Martins out of Harriet's silly, vacillating head, her friend, in a hurry, and not at all with the tender care she had intended, tells the girl of Mr. Elton's prospects. And the shock revives Mr. Elton's supremacy.

The future Mrs. Elton is a Miss Hawkins, who is said to be handsome, elegant, highly accomplished, perfectly amiable, and the possessor of ten thousand pounds. No wonder Mr. Elton is triumphant in the abundant consolation which has come to him.

Emma, while satisfied that a Mrs. Elton will be a relief and an aid in renewing her intercourse with the vicar, and while too indifferent on the subject to think much of the lady, has this sop for her mortification on Harriet's account, that though, doubtless, good enough for Mr. Elton and Highbury, there is no superiority of connexion on Miss Hawkins' side. She brings no name, no blood, no alliance. She is the younger daughter of a Bristol merchant. "All the grandeur of the connexion seemed dependent on the elder sister, who was *very well married*, to a gentleman in a great way, near Bristol, who kept two carriages. That was the wind-up of the history; that was the glory of Miss Hawkins."

From these reflections, we may judge that Emma has more than a tinge of Mr. Darcy's pride and super-

ciliousness. Was Jane Austen herself entirely free from the same defects? We are all fallible mortals.

Harriet Smith, easily carried captive by public opinion, now hears so much of Mr. Elton in every house she enters, and is so impressed by the gifts, graces, and happiness of the bride, that she would have been in a fair way to break her heart over her disappointment, had it not been for the diversion caused by a slight revival of her intercourse with the Martins. Under the influence of Robert Martin's good feeling, his sister has called again for Harriet; and Emma is sufficiently shrewd to comprehend the danger of a heart's being caught on the rebound. She takes care to regulate Harriet's return of this civility. She herself carries Harriet in the Hartfield carriage to Abbey Mill Farm,* and pays a visit to an old servant while Harriet makes her call, which is thus abridged to a quarter of an hour's length. Harriet's account of it is rather a sad one. Mrs. Martin and the girls have been as uncomfortable as their visitor; and just when they were becoming more cordial, in consequence of somebody saying that Harriet was grown, when the whole party could not help looking at the wainscot by the window, where the different heights of all the girls stood as they had been noted by *him* last summer, the Hartfield carriage was announced. That was enough; the style and the shortness of the visit could not be mistaken. Fourteen minutes to be given to those with whom Harriet had thankfully passed six weeks, not six months ago!

Though Emma has contrived it all, she has the

* I have already said that Jane Austen wastes no time in descriptions of places; yet she often contrives to suggest so much in a few lines, that her pleasant, homely English scenes, no less than her life-like characters, rise vividly before the mind. That briefest description of Abbey Mill Farm—comfortable and tidy, with the short, straight walk between the apple-trees up to the front door—does its business thoroughly. I have seen more than one such cosy, trim, old-fashioned farmhouse, which has brought the exclamation to my lips, "That was where Harriet Smith visited the Martins."

grace to feel it is a bad business, and would have given a great deal to have had the Martins in a higher rank of life.

It is some comfort to Emma to hear that Frank Churchill is at last coming to Randalls, to stay a whole fortnight. His father brings him at once to the Woodhouses; and the young man is, as nearly as possible, all that Emma's fancy had painted him—handsome, gentlemanlike, lively, eager to be pleased, and by no means unwilling to admire, and show that he admires, Emma Woodhouse.

After he has won her good-will by his warm praises of his stepmother, and contrived in complimenting Mrs. Weston to compliment Emma, she begins to wonder if he, too, is aware of what their friends expect from their knowing each other, and whether his merry compliments are signs of acquiescence or defiance. As for herself, she must wait and know him better before she has any opinion on the subject; but the first impression is greatly in his favour.

Mr. Weston has business at the Crown Inn, and his son asks carelessly if there is a family named Fairfax—no, he believes the name is Barnes, or Bates—living near, as he has a call to make on them. There had been that degree of acquaintance between him and one of the members of the family, when living at Weymouth, which requires such an attention, and it may be as well shown then as afterwards.

To be sure, his father knows the Bateses and Miss Fairfax; let Frank call upon her by all means.

Any day will do, the young man explains; there is no particular necessity for calling that morning.

But Mr. Weston decides promptly that the mark of respect ought to be shown at once. Frank had met Jane Fairfax at the Campbells, where she was everybody's equal; here she is with a poor old grandmother who has barely enough to live on. If he does not call early it will be a slight. And the young man allows himself to be convinced.

Mrs. Weston, in her turn, brings Frank Churchill—with whom she is on the happiest terms—the following day; and Emma walks and shops with them in Highbury. She is on such an easy footing with the young fellow already as to inquire about his visit of the previous morning.

He thanks Emma for her preparatory hint about the talkative aunt, who would otherwise have been the death of him. As it was, she entangled him into a visit of three-quarters of an hour's length, when he had only meant to stay ten minutes.

Emma asks how he thinks Miss Fairfax is looking?

Ill, very ill, he tells her, that is, if a young lady can ever be allowed to look ill, and Miss Fairfax is naturally so pale as almost to give the appearance of bad health—a most deplorable want of complexion.

Emma defends Jane Fairfax's soft, delicate skin from the accusation of having a sickly hue; but her companion only makes the defence adroitly into an opportunity for professing his preference for "a fine glow of health."

Still Emma insists he must admire Miss Fairfax in spite of her complexion.

But he only shakes his head, laughs, and says he cannot separate Miss Fairfax and her complexion.

Emma is curious to know how much he had known of Jane Fairfax at Weymouth.

But when he first leaves the question unanswered, because he must go into a shop and show himself a citizen of Highbury by buying something, and then asserts it is always a lady's right to decide on the degree of acquaintance, she has to inform him he is as discreet as Miss Fairfax herself.

After all, he is not unwilling to return to the subject, and talk of Miss Fairfax and her piano-playing; and Emma is as foolishly elated as a child, by a chance admission of his, which seems to confirm her former conclusion. Frank Churchill has proclaimed his own inability to judge Miss Fairfax's musical powers, but

added that a gentleman who was a musical man would never ask the young lady to whom he was engaged to sit down to "the instrument," if Miss Fairfax could sit down instead. The next moment Frank has to admit that the gentleman was Mr. Dixon, and the lady, to whom he was on the point of marriage, Miss Campbell.

Emma, in her amusement at the corroboration of her suspicions, does not attempt to conceal her inference from what her companion has said. Poor Mrs. Dixon! As to Miss Fairfax, she must have felt the improper and dangerous distinction.

Frank Churchill hesitates a little. "There appeared such a perfectly good understanding among them;" but the next moment he owns that it is impossible for him to tell how it might have been behind the scenes, and leaves Emma to suppose what she likes.

Emma's good opinion of Frank Churchill is in some danger of being nipped in the bud, when she hears that he has gone off to London merely to have his hair cut. A sudden freak seems to have seized him at breakfast, and he has sent for a chaise and set off, intending to return to dinner; but with no more important view that appeared than having his hair cut. There is no harm in his travelling sixteen miles on such an errand, but there is an air of foppery and nonsense in it which Emma cannot approve.

His father only calls him a coxcomb; but Mrs. Weston passes the matter over as quietly as possible, and Mr. Knightley, when informed of the expedition, is heard to mutter over his newspaper, "Hum! just the trifling, silly fellow I took him for."

Frank Churchill comes back punctually. He has got his hair cut, and he laughs at himself with a good grace, but without seeming really ashamed of what he has done.

At a dinner-party in the neighbourhood, Emma receives a very interesting addition to the little history she has made out for Jane Fairfax. A fine piano from

Broadwood's has arrived at the Bateses', to the great astonishment of the family, who have at length come to the conclusion that it is one of Colonel Campbell's kind gifts.

But why should Colonel Campbell present Jane Fairfax with a piano at this late date, and in this mysterious manner? Emma, on the first opportunity, taxes Frank Churchill with sharing her thoughts on the subject. The piano has not come from the Campbells; it might have come from the Dixons, from *Mr.* as well as *Mrs.* Dixon; and then Emma is so foolish and wrong as to repeat to Frank Churchill all her suspicions of *Mr.* Dixon's secret preference for Jane, and Jane's response to that preference, without, however, for a moment impugning the good intentions and principles of either.

He hears it all with the greatest gravity, and fully acknowledges the probability of her version of the gift. He is ready to be guided by her greater penetration. He did see in it at first only a mark of paternal kindness from Colonel Campbell; but when she mentioned *Mrs.* Dixon, he has felt how much more likely it is that the piano should be the tribute of warm female friendship; and now he can regard it in no other light than as an offering of love.

Oh! mischievous, thoughtless Frank, and credulous, confident Emma!

Miss Bates and Jane Fairfax, Harriet Smith, and other less important guests, join the party in the evening. Jane looks superior to all the others; still Emma can affectionately rejoice in the blooming sweetness and artless manner of her friend, with regard to whom it could never have been guessed how many tears she had been shedding lately. For "to be in company nicely dressed herself, and seeing others nicely dressed, to sit and smile, and look pretty, and say nothing, was enough for the happiness of the present hour."

When the gentlemen join the ladies in the drawing-room, Frank Churchill immediately seeks out Emma, and

enters into an animated conversation with her, devoting himself to her.

Once, indeed, she notices him looking intently across the room at Miss Fairfax. "What is the matter?" Emma asks.

He starts. "Thank you for rousing me," he replies; "I believe I have been very rude; but really, Miss Fairfax has done her hair in so odd a way that I cannot keep my eyes from her. I never saw anything so *outré*. Those curls! I see nobody else looking like her. I must go and ask whether it is an Irish fashion—shall I? Yes, I will; I declare I will, and you shall see how she likes it—whether she colours."

He is gone immediately, and Emma soon sees him standing before Miss Fairfax and talking to her; but as to the effect of his conversation, he has placed himself inadvertently exactly between her and Emma, so that the latter can distinguish nothing.

Mrs. Weston tells Emma that Mr. Knightley's carriage—for the use of which on this occasion, Emma, who stands up for proper dignity, had already complimented him—brought over Miss Bates and Jane Fairfax, and is to take them home again.

Both Mrs. Weston and her old pupil are agreed in their praise of Mr. Knightley's consideration and kindness. But when Mrs. Weston suggests another motive, and says Emma has infected her, for she has made a match between Mr. Knightley and Jane Fairfax, the listener bursts forth into vehement opposition. How can Mrs. Weston think of such a thing! Mr. Knightley must not marry. Emma cannot have little Henry, her nephew, cut out of Donwell. Jane Fairfax mistress of the Abbey! No, no! Mr. Knightley does not want to marry. Mrs. Weston is not to put it in his head. He is as happy as possible by himself, with his farm, and his sheep, and his library, and all the parish to manage. And he is extremely fond of his brother's children. He has no occasion to marry, either to fill up his time or his heart.

Mrs. Weston is accustomed to Emma's ebullitions. The elder lady contents herself with reminding her companion that if the gentleman really loves Jane Fairfax——

“Nonsense,” Emma interrupts the speaker hotly. “He does not care about Jane Fairfax in the way of love ; I am sure he does not.”

Emma goes on to protest in extravagant terms that it would be a shameful, degrading connexion to have Miss Bates haunting the Abbey, thanking him all day long for his great kindness in marrying Jane, and then flying off through half a sentence to her mother's old petticoat, not that it was such a very old petticoat either.

“For shame, Emma !” Mrs. Weston cries out at being diverted against her conscience ; and she will not resign her fancy. She has heard Mr. Knightley speak so very highly of Jane Fairfax. He is so concerned for her welfare. He is such an admirer of her music. What if he and not the Campbells prove the donor of the piano ?

Emma, too, remains unconvinced, and as indignant as unconvinced. Mrs. Weston takes up ideas and runs away with them, as she has many a time reproached Emma for doing. She believes nothing of the kind of the piano. Only absolute proof will convince her that Mr. Knightley has any thought of marrying Jane Fairfax.

In the interest of the argument, Emma has lost sight of Frank Churchill, beyond the fact that he had found a seat next Miss Fairfax. Presently, however, he comes over to join their host in pressing Miss Woodhouse—the young lady of most consequence at the party—to play and sing.

Emma complies, only attempting what she can accomplish with credit. She is agreeably surprised by having Frank Churchill volunteer a pleasant second. He has all the praise usual on such occasions, and the two sing together again to their mutual satisfaction and that of the company.

Emma, conscious that she is to be far outstripped, resigns her place to Jane Fairfax. Frank Churchill sings with her also. It seems that they have sung together at Weymouth; but Emma cannot attend to them for the sight of Mr. Knightley among the most attentive of the listeners. Her objections to his marriage crowd into her mind and supersede every other thought. It would be a great disappointment to her brother, and consequently to her sister, a real injury to the children, a mortifying change to all. For herself she cannot endure the prospect. A Mrs. Knightley for them all to give way to! No, Mr. Knightley must never marry. Little Henry must remain the heir of Donwell.

Mr. Knightley looks round, and comes and sits by Emma. She tries him in various ways. His admiration of the music is warm, but except for Mrs. Weston's words would not have struck her. He cuts short her allusion to his kindness in reference to the carriage, but then he will never dwell on any kindness of his own. Above all he speaks with perfect calmness, and a shade of consolatory disapprobation, on the great topic of the evening, the gift of the piano. It was kindly given, but the Campbells would have done better to have announced their intention. Surprises are foolish things. He should have expected better judgment from Colonel Campbell.

From that moment Emma could have taken her oath Mr. Knightley had nothing to do with the present.

Jane Fairfax's voice grows husky.

"That will do," said Mr. Knightley, aloud. "You have sung quite enough for one evening."

The inconsiderate audience beg for another song; and Frank Churchill is heard saying, "I think you could manage this without effort."

Mr. Knightley now grows angry. "That fellow thinks of nothing but showing off his own voice. This must not be;" and he calls on Miss Bates to interfere.

The singing is put an end to, as there are no other young lady performers, but a dance is got up.

Mrs. Weston, capital in her country dances, takes her place at the piano.

Frank Churchill, with most becoming gallantry, secures Emma's hand, and takes her to her place at the top of the set.

Emma is nothing loth, but she cannot help watching Mr. Knightley. He is no dancer in general; if he is now alert in seeking Jane Fairfax as a partner, the sign will be ominous. But no, he continues talking to his hostess, and looks on unconcernedly while Jane is claimed by some other.

Emma has no longer any alarm for Henry; his interests are yet safe; and she leads off the dance with genuine spirit and enjoyment. Not more than five couples can be mustered; but the rarity and the suddenness of it make it very delightful, and she finds herself well matched in a partner. They are a couple worth looking at.

Two dances, unfortunately, are all that can be allowed. It is growing late, and Miss Bates becomes anxious to get home, on her mother's account. After some attempts, therefore, to be permitted to begin again, they are obliged to thank Mrs. Weston, look sorrowful, and have done.

"Perhaps it is as well," said Frank Churchill, as he attended Emma to her carriage. "I must have asked Miss Fairfax, and her languid dancing would not have agreed with me, after yours."

Emma had gone next day to shop with Harriet Smith at the Highbury linendraper's. Shopping with Harriet was no easy matter, when it involved convincing Harriet that if she wanted a plain muslin it was of no use to look at a figured; and that a blue riband, be it ever so beautiful, would still never match her yellow pattern.

Already the young ladies have encountered Frank Churchill and Mrs. Weston at the door of the Bateses'

house, opposite. Mrs. Weston is there, in performance of a promise she had forgotten, but of which her stepson had reminded her, that she should go and hear the newly-imported "instrument."

Frank Churchill has attempted to get off from accompanying Mrs. Weston after he met Emma, and she refused to be one of the party. The matter has ended in Mrs. Weston's carrying off Frank Churchill, according to their original intention, and the girls making their purchases at Ford's. But in a few moments Miss Bates and Mrs. Weston come over together, and entreat Miss Woodhouse and Miss Smith to join the others, and give their opinion of the piano.

Miss Bates pours forth one of the most amusing of her effusions.

"I hope Mrs. Bates and Miss Fairfax are——" began Emma.

"Very well, I am much obliged to you. My mother is delightfully well; and Jane caught no cold last night. How is Mr. Woodhouse? I am so glad to hear such a good account. Mrs. Weston told me you were here. 'Oh, then,' said I, 'I must run across. I am sure Miss Woodhouse will allow me just to run across, and entreat her to come in. My mother will be so very happy to see her; and now we are such a nice party, she cannot refuse.' 'Ay, pray do,' said Mr. Frank Churchill, 'Miss Woodhouse's opinion of the instrument will be worth having.' 'But,' said I, 'I shall be more sure of succeeding if one of you will go with me.' 'Oh!' said he, 'wait half a minute, till I have finished my job,' for, would you believe it, Miss Woodhouse, there he is, in the most obliging manner in the world, fastening in the rivet of my mother's spectacles. The rivet came out, you know, this morning; so very obliging!—for my mother had no use of her spectacles, could not put them on, and, by-the-bye, everybody ought to have two pair of spectacles; they should, indeed, Jane said so. I meant to take them over to John Saunders, the first thing I did, but something or other hindered

me all the morning; first one thing, and then another, there is no saying what, you know. At one time, Patty came to say she thought the kitchen-chimney wanted sweeping. ‘Oh!’ said I, ‘Patty, do not come with your bad news to me. Here is the rivet of your mistress’s spectacles out.’ Then the baked apples came home. Mrs. Wallis sent them by her boy; they are extremely civil and obliging to us, the Wallises, always. I have heard some people say that Mrs. Wallis can be uncivil, and give a very rude answer; but we have never known anything but the greatest attention from them. And it cannot be for the value of our custom now, for what is our consumption of bread, you know? only three of us. Besides, dear Jane at present—and she really eats nothing—makes such a shocking breakfast, you would be quite frightened if you saw it. I dare not let my mother know how little she eats; so I say one thing, and then I say another, and it passes off. But about the middle of the day she gets hungry, and there is nothing she likes so well as these baked apples, and they are extremely wholesome, for I took the opportunity the other day of asking Mr. Perry; I happened to meet him in the street. Not that I had any doubt before. I have so often heard Mr. Woodhouse recommend a baked apple. I believe it is the only way Mr. Woodhouse thinks the fruit thoroughly wholesome. We have apple-dumplings, however, very often. Patty makes an excellent apple-dumpling. Well, Mrs. Weston, you have prevailed, I hope, and these ladies will oblige us.”

Emma would be very happy to wait on Mrs. Bates; and they did at last move out of the shop, with no further delay from Miss Bates than “How do you do, Mrs. Ford? I beg your pardon; I did not see you before. I hear you have a charming collection of new ribands from town. Jane came back delighted yesterday. Thank ye! the gloves do very well, only a little too large about the wrist; but Jane is taking them in.”

“What was I talking of?” said she, beginning again when they were all in the street.

Emma wondered on what, of all the medley, she would fix.

“I declare I cannot recollect what I was talking of. Oh, my mother’s spectacles! So very obliging of Mr. Frank Churchill! ‘Oh,’ said he, ‘I do think I can fasten the rivet; I like a job of this kind excessively;’ which, you know, showed him to be so very——Indeed, I must say, that much as I have heard of him before, and much as I had expected, he far exceeds anything—I do congratulate you, Mrs. Weston, most warmly. He seems everything the fondest parent could——‘Oh,’ said he, ‘I can fasten that rivet; I like a job of that kind excessively.’ I never shall forget his manner; and when I brought out the baked apples from the closet, and hoped our friends would be so very obliging as to take some, ‘Oh,’ said he directly, ‘there is nothing in the way of fruit half so good, and these are the finest-looking home-baked apples I ever saw in my life.’ That, you know, was so very——and I am sure, by his manner, it was no compliment. Indeed, they are very delightful apples, and Mrs. Wallis does them full justice, only we do not have them baked more than twice, and Mr. Woodhouse made us promise to have them done three times; but Miss Woodhouse will be so good as not to mention it. The apples themselves are the very finest sort for baking, beyond a doubt; all from Donwell—some of Mr. Knightley’s most liberal supply. He sends us a sack every year, and certainly there never was such a keeping apple anywhere as one of his trees—I believe there are two of them. My mother says the orchard was always famous in her younger days. But I was really quite struck the other day, for Mr. Knightley called one morning, and Jane was eating these apples, and we talked about them, and said how much she enjoyed them, and he asked whether we were not got to the end of our stock. ‘I am sure you must be,’ said he, ‘and I will send you another supply, for I have a great many more than I can ever use. William Larkins let me keep a larger quantity than usual this year. I will

send you some more before they get good for nothing.' So I begged he would not—for really, as to ours being gone, I could not absolutely say that we had a great many left—it was but half a dozen, indeed—but they should all be kept for Jane, and I could not at all bear that he should be sending us more, so liberal as he had been already, and Jane said the same; and when he was gone she almost quarrelled with me—no, I should not say quarrelled, for we never had a quarrel in our lives, but she was quite distressed that I had owned the apples were so nearly gone; she wished I had made him believe we had a great many left. 'Oh,' said I, 'my dear, I did say as much as I could.' However, the very same evening William Larkins came over with a large basket of apples, a bushel at least, and I was very much obliged, and went down and spoke to William Larkins, and said everything, as you may suppose. William Larkins is such an old acquaintance, I am always glad to see him. But, however, I found out afterwards from Patty that William said it was all the apples of that sort his master had; he had brought them all, and now his master had not one left to bake or boil. William did not seem to mind it himself, he was so pleased to think his master had sold so many—for William, you know, thinks more of his master's profit than anything—but Mrs. Hodges, he said, was quite displeased at their being all sent away. She could not bear that her master should not be able to have another apple-tart this spring. He told Patty this, but bid her not mind it, and be sure not to say anything to us about it, for Mrs. Hodges *would* be cross sometimes, and as long as so many sacks were sold, it did not signify who ate the remainder; and so Patty told me, and I was exceedingly shocked indeed! I would not have Mr. Knightley know anything about it for the world! He would be so very—I wanted to keep it from Jane's knowledge, but unluckily I had mentioned it before I was aware."

"Miss Bates had just done as Patty opened the door, and her visitors walked upstairs without having

any regular narration to attend to, pursued only by the sounds of her desultory good-will. ‘Pray take care, Mrs. Weston, there is a step at the turning. Pray take care, Miss Woodhouse, ours is rather a dark staircase; rather darker and narrower than one could wish. Miss Smith, pray take care. Miss Woodhouse, I am quite concerned; I am sure you have hurt your foot. Miss Smith, the step at the turning.’”*

The scene which the opening of the door presents is often quoted for its perfection of quiet realism. “The appearance of the little sitting-room as they entered was tranquillity itself. Mrs. Bates, deprived of her usual employment, slumbering on one side of the fire; Frank Churchill, at a table near her, most deeply occupied about her spectacles; and Jane Fairfax, standing with her back to them, intent on her pianoforte.”

“What!” said Mrs. Weston, “have not you finished it yet? You would not earn a very good livelihood as a working silversmith at this rate.”

“I have not been working uninterruptedly,” he replied; “I have been assisting Miss Fairfax in trying to make her instrument stand steadily; it was not quite firm, an unevenness in the floor, I believe. You see we have been wedging one leg with paper. This was very kind of you to be persuaded to come. I was almost afraid you would be hurrying home.”

This last sentence is for Emma, as he immediately renews his marked attentions to her, contrives that she shall be seated by him, looks out the best roasted apple for her, and tries to make her advise him in his work, till Jane is ready to sit down to the piano.

There is no doubt Jane is agitated. Emma imagines that she has not possessed the instrument long enough to get accustomed to its associations. When the player

* I think it was Archbishop Whately who said, *apropos* of Jane Austen’s novels, that so far from its being easy to represent the simplicity and folly which, like poverty, we have always with us, so as to divert a reader, it demands nothing short of genius for the task.

is able to do herself justice, everybody is loud in praise of the piano.

Frank Churchill, in the middle of an assertion that whoever Colonel Campbell had employed, the person has not chosen ill, introduces with a smile to Emma certain *doubles entendres* with regard to the musical taste of the old Weymouth party, and to the enjoyment which Miss Fairfax's friends in Ireland must have in imagining what she will be doing, until even Emma tells him in a whisper it is not fair, hers has been a random guess.

Jane pretends not to hear, and answers with the briefest acknowledgment of his apparent meaning. He goes to her and urges her to play one of the waltzes they danced last night, exclaiming, "Let me hear them once again."

As she plays, he exclaims on the felicity of hearing again a tune which has made one happy before, adding, "If I mistake not, that was danced at Weymouth."

She looks at him for a moment, colours deeply, and plays something else.

He brings over some music, including a new set of "The Irish Melodies," to show to Emma. The music had been selected and sent with the piano. Frank Churchill honours that part of the gift particularly. It has all been so thoughtful, so complete. True affection only could have prompted it.

Emma wishes he would not be so pointed in his remarks, but glancing at Jane, she catches the ghost of a smile hovering about her lips, and has less scruple in her amusement. This excellent Jane Fairfax indulges in very reprehensible feelings.

Mr. Knightley passes the window on horseback; and Miss Bates trots into the next room, and from an open window holds a colloquy with him, charmingly characteristic of both speakers, and perfectly audible to the visitors in the apartment she has just quitted.

"How d'ye do? How d'ye do? Very well, I thank you; so obliged to you for the carriage last night. We were just in time; my mother just ready for us. Pray

come in; do come in; you will find some friends here."

So began Miss Bates, and Mr. Knightley seemed determined to be heard in his turn, for most resolutely and commandingly did he say, "'How is your niece, Miss Bates? I want to inquire after you all, but particularly your niece. How is Miss Fairfax? I hope she caught no cold last night. How is she to-day? Tell me how Miss Fairfax is!'"

"And Miss Bates was obliged to give a direct answer before he would hear anything else. The listeners were amused, and Mrs. Weston gave Emma a look of particular meaning. But Emma still shook her head in steady scepticism.

"'So obliged to you! So very much obliged to you for the carriage,' resumed Miss Bates.

"He cut her short with, 'I am going to Kingston. Can I do anything for you?'"

"'Oh, dear! Kingston, are you? Mrs. Cole was saying the other day she wanted something from Kingston.'

"'Mrs. Cole has servants to send. Can I do anything for *you*?'"

"'No, I thank you. But do come in. Who do you think is here? Miss Woodhouse and Miss Smith, so kind as to call to hear the new pianoforte. Do put up your horse at the Crown, and come in.'

"'Well,' said he, in a deliberating manner, 'for five minutes, perhaps.'

"'And here is Mrs. Weston and Mr. Frank Churchill, too. Quite delightful, so many friends.'

"'No, not now, I thank you. I could not stay two minutes. I must get on to Kingston as fast as I can.'

"'Oh, do come in; they will be so very happy to see you.'

"'No, no; your room is full enough. I will call another day and hear the pianoforte.'

"Well, I am so sorry. Oh, Mr. Knightley, what a delightful party last night; how extremely pleasant!

Did you ever see such dancing? Was not it delightful? Miss Woodhouse and Mr. Frank Churchill; I never saw anything equal to it.'

" 'Oh, very delightful indeed; I can say nothing less, for I suppose Miss Woodhouse and Mr. Frank Churchill are hearing everything that passes, and' (raising his voice still more) 'I do not see why Miss Fairfax should not be mentioned too. I think Miss Fairfax dances very well; and Mrs. Weston is the very best country dance player, without exception, in England. Now, if your friends have any gratitude, they will say something pretty loud about you and me in return; but I cannot stay to hear it.'

" 'Oh, Mr. Knightley, one moment more; something of consequence—so shocked! Jane and I are both so shocked about the apples!'

" 'What is the matter now?'

" 'To think of you sending us all your store apples. You said you had a great many, and now you have not one left. We really are so shocked. Mrs. Hodges may well be angry. William Larkins mentioned it here. You should not have done it, indeed you should not have done it. Ah, he is off.'"

Frank Churchill easily induces his father to consent to give a ball the night before Frank is to leave Rاندalls. No room in the house is large enough to meet the hospitable gentleman's views, and it is at last fixed to give the ball at the Crown Inn. Emma is engaged by the hero of the evening for the first two dances; and even the grave Jane Fairfax is sufficiently moved by the brilliant prospect to exclaim, "Oh! Miss Woodhouse, I hope nothing will happen to prevent the ball. I look forward to it, I own, with very great pleasure."

But time and tide, and the humours of a tyrannical woman, accommodate themselves to no man. A summons arrives for Frank Churchill to return instantly to his uncle's place at Enscombe, as his aunt is far too unwell to do without him.

Frank has no great belief in the illness, but he is forced to obey orders. The ball has to be deferred to the uncertain period of his next visit.

Extremely disconsolate, he pays his farewell calls, and when at Hartfield, while talking of other things—the length of time before he came to Highbury, his recent leave-taking at the Bateses, he seems suddenly on the point of a serious declaration, “In short,” said he, after getting up and walking to a window—“perhaps, Miss Woodhouse—I think you can hardly be without suspicion——”

But either Emma does not afford him sufficient encouragement, or some other obstacle occurs to hinder him, for he goes no further than a profession of warm regard for Hartfield.

To Emma the loss of the ball and her partner is a severe disappointment. She finds Jane Fairfax’s comparative composure on the misfortune odious. But she is a little softened by hearing of the bad headaches from which Jane has been suffering, and is willing to admit that her unbecoming indifference may proceed from the apathy engendered by bad health.

Emma has arrived at the point of believing she returns Frank Churchill’s love. At first, when she misses him and the ball most, she fancies she is very much in love; then the “very much” dwindles down to a “little,” since Emma, who is still quite capable of reasoning on her feelings, makes the acute observation, that though she admires and likes him, she continues to see faults in him; and she notices that in all the imaginary scenes and dialogues which she invents for herself and Frank Churchill, while he is to urge his suit with all the eloquence of passion and true affection, she is always to refuse him, in the tenderest and most delicate manner indeed, but still to refuse him. Their love is inevitably destined to subside into friendship.

Emma had long ago determined never to quit her father, but it strikes her now—that were she strongly

attached to Frank, there would be, even in anticipation, more struggle in the sacrifice.

Having come to this sage conclusion, Emma is a little sorry for Frank ; the next thing is to provide him with a substitute for the wife he can never win from Hartfield. Her own partiality for her friend, and desire to atone to her for her former error, together with an accidental polite reference in one of his letters to his step-mother, puts Harriet Smith into Emma's creative brain. For she is not cured of match-making, she is still inveterately possessed with what is most apt to be the clever, warm-hearted matron's mania for arranging the matrimonial affairs of others.

In fact, Emma, with all her youthful pride and dignity, is in some danger of becoming a meddler and busybody in other people's business. Even the knowledge she might have had of how different are Mr. and Mrs. Weston's—not to say Mr. and Mrs. Churchill's—expectations for their son and nephew, does not serve to crush the foolish idea, though it only lurks in the background in the meantime.

III.

A new event stirs Highbury. Mr. Elton brings home his bride. She is first seen in her pew at church, and is ecstatically admired.

Emma withholds her judgment, even beyond the opportunity given by her first call at the vicarage, when she takes Harriet Smith with her. Emma will not pronounce an opinion yet, beyond the very modified admission that Mrs. Elton is "elegantly dressed," while the meekly magnanimous little goose, Harriet, finds the bride "beautiful, very beautiful," and adds, with a sigh, "Happy creature ! He called her 'Augusta ;' how delightful !"

On farther acquaintance, Emma discovers, with a certain severe satisfaction, that Mr. Elton, as she has learnt to know him, is fitly mated.

Mrs. Elton is one of Jane Austen's most cleverly and sharply-drawn characters. The pretentious, underbred woman, "pert and familiar," without the faintest sense of her own deficiencies—on the contrary, with an overflowing self-satisfaction and self-conceit patronising everybody and everything—is hit to the life. We have all heard similar boasting to that of Mrs. Elton on the subject of her rich Bristol brother-in-law's house, "Maple Grove." We have listened to like-minded proposals "to explore" with the Sucklings, when they bring over their barouche-landau, our own accessible, familiar neighbourhood, every step of which is intimately known to us. We have been recommended to watering-places, and offered introductions by those whom we were tempted to regard as little called upon or qualified to give us advice and assistance. We have been treated to the modern "doubles" of all Mrs. Elton's bridal airs and affectations; that sporting of the newly-acquired importance of the matron; that literal quoting, in the worst taste, of Mr. E. and the "*cara sposa*;" that free and easy manner of naming our own familiar friends by their surnames,* as if the men were the new comer's special cronies; that vulgar superciliousness with regard to the supposed disadvantages and consequent inferiority of other people whom we have every reason to esteem and cherish. Have we not been in danger of crying out with Emma, "Insufferable woman! worse than I had supposed. Absolutely insupportable! Knightley! I could not have believed it. Knightley! Never seen him in her life before, and call him Knightley! and discover that he is a gentleman! A little, upstart, vulgar being, with her Mr. E. and her *cara sposa*, and her resources, and all her airs

* Already, in the interval between the writing of "Pride and Prejudice" and of "Emma," the constant use of men's surnames in conversation was going out in good society.

of pert pretension and underbred finery,* actually to discover that Mr. Knightley is a gentleman! I doubt whether he will return the compliment, and discover her to be a lady. I could not have believed it! And to propose that she and I should unite to form a musical club! One would fancy we were bosom friends! And Mrs. Weston! Astonished that the person who brought me up should be a gentlewoman! Worse and worse! I never met with her equal. Much beyond my hopes! Harriet is disgraced by any comparison."

Mr. Elton, fortunately or unfortunately, is more than satisfied with his choice. It is fortunate for his matrimonial felicity; it is unfortunate where the man's mind and heart are concerned. It proves him hardly capable of appreciating any higher qualities than those with which his wife is endowed; and under her influence he is certain to deteriorate.

Mrs. Elton soon shows her resentment at Emma's coldness. Her pique causes the vicar's wife to behave to Harriet Smith with a sneering negligence, which convinces Emma that Harriet's attachment, and her own share in it, have been "an offering to conjugal unreserve" which does little credit to Mr. Elton's generosity and honour.

With the ready propensity to rivalry of a small, vain, and vindictive nature, Mrs. Elton puts herself, as she judges, at the head of an opposite faction. She conceives a violent fancy for Jane Fairfax, whom she oppresses with condescending notice and attention, accepted in grateful good faith by Jane's relations, and by Jane herself, because no better friendship, as Mr. Knightley takes care to remind Emma, offers itself to the lonely girl.

One good thing comes to Emma as the result of her conversation with Mr. Knightley on the incongruity

* I have heard that a great modern statesman, who takes some relaxation in reading novels, and who is an ardent admirer of Jane Austen, is specially in love with Mrs. Elton. Her portrait is his favourite in this wonderful picture-gallery.

of Jane Fairfax's intimacy at the vicarage. Emma has the courage to hint to Mr. Knightley that the extent of his admiration for Jane Fairfax may take him by surprise some day.

"Mr. Knightley was hard at work upon the lower buttons of his thick leather gaiters, and either the exertion of getting them together, or some other cause, brought the colour into his face as he answered—

"‘Oh! are you there? But you are miserably behind-hand. Mr. Cole gave me a hint of it six weeks ago.’

"He stopped, Emma felt her foot pressed by Mrs. Weston, and did not herself know what to think. In a moment he went on—

"‘That will never be, however, I can assure you. Miss Fairfax, I daresay, would not have me if I were to ask her, and I am sure I shall never ask her.’

"Emma returned her friend's pressure with interest, and was pleased enough to exclaim, ‘You are not vain, Mr. Knightley; I will say that for you.’

"He seemed hardly to hear her; he was thoughtful, and, in a manner which showed him not pleased, soon afterwards said, ‘So you have been settling that I should marry Jane Fairfax?’

"‘No, indeed, I have not. You have scolded me too much for match-making for me to presume to take such a liberty with you. Oh! no; upon my word I have not the smallest wish for your marrying Jane Fairfax, or Jane anybody. You would not come in and sit with us in this comfortable way if you were married.’

"Mr. Knightley was thoughtful again. The result of his reverie was—‘No, Emma, I do not think the extent of my admiration for her will ever take me by surprise. I never had a thought of her in that way, I assure you.’ And soon afterwards, ‘Jane Fairfax is a very charming young woman; but not even Jane Fairfax is perfect. She has a fault. She has not the open temper which a man would wish for in a wife.’

"Emma could not but rejoice to hear she had a fault.

“ ‘Well, Mrs. Weston,’ said Emma triumphantly, when he left them, ‘what do you say now to Mr. Knightley’s marrying Jane Fairfax?’ ”

“ ‘Why, really, dear Emma, I say that he is so very much occupied by the idea of not being in love with her, that I should not wonder if it were to end in his being so at last. Do not beat me.’ ”

At a dinner-party given by the Woodhouses, to which John Knightley has come down by accident, Jane Fairfax is present by special invitation, her hostess being a little conscience-stricken for her sins of omission in that quarter.

John Knightley looks at Mrs. Elton in her lace and pearls, taking notes for Isabella’s edification; but he consents to talk to a quiet girl and old acquaintance like Jane Fairfax. In their conversation, it comes out that she goes every morning before breakfast to the post-office* to fetch the letters. It is her daily errand when at Highbury.

She provokes the remark from her companion that the post-office has a great charm at one period of people’s lives. When Miss Fairfax has lived to Mr. John Knightley’s age, she will begin to think letters are never worth going through such a shower of rain as he has seen her out in that morning, to obtain them.

He makes her blush. What is worse than his blunt, friendly remonstrance, he attracts the attention of the rest of the company to the subject. Mr. Woodhouse strikes in with his plaintive protest against anybody, a young lady especially, exposing herself to wet. Mrs. Elton rushes to the rescue with her loud, authoritative

* In the course of the conversation, Jane Austen puts into Jane Fairfax’s mouth a strong expression of admiration for the post-office arrangements, with their regularity and despatch. Yet these were the days of heavily-taxed letters and delayed conveyance by coach. What would Jane Austen have thought of the penny post, with its multiplied responsibilities and requirements, to which railway celerity is given? and still the system bears the strain, and admirably fulfils the intention of its founder.

reproach: "My dear Jane, what is this I hear? Going to the post-office in the rain! You sad girl; how could you do such a thing?" Mrs. Weston is appealed to, and she adds her quiet, sensible prohibition against young people's running any risk.

"Oh!" cries Mrs. Elton, "she *shall not* do such a thing again. The man who fetches our letters shall inquire for yours too, and bring them to you."

Jane, thus baited, stands mildly but firmly at bay. Mrs. Elton is extremely kind, but Jane cannot give up her early walk.* She is advised to be out of doors. The post-office is an object.

Mrs. Elton, who has neither good breeding nor tact, will not be put down.

"My dear Jane, say no more about it. The thing is determined—that is" (laughing affectedly) "as far as I can presume to determine anything without the concurrence of my lord and master. You know, Mrs. Weston, you and I must be cautious how we express ourselves."

Still Jane looks unconquered.

The conversation wanders to handwriting. John Knightley refers to the statement that the same sort of writing often prevails in a family, and observes that Isabella and Emma write very much alike.

"Yes," said his brother hesitatingly, "there is a likeness. I know what you mean—but Emma's hand is the strongest.

"Isabella and Emma both write beautifully," said poor Mr. Woodhouse, "and always did, and so does Mrs. Weston," with half a sigh and half a smile at her.

Dinner is on the table. Mrs. Elton, before she can be spoken to, is ready; and before Mr. Woodhouse has reached her, with his request to be allowed to hand her into the dining-parlour, is saying—

"Must I go first? I really am ashamed of always leading the way!"

* Morning walks, "taken fasting," are now, we may be thankful, an utterly exploded prescription for delicate men and women.

Jane's solicitude about fetching her letters has not escaped Emma, who ascribes it to an unworthy source; and if the young hostess had not been in her own house, therefore on honour to Jane, Emma might have been wicked enough to make some remark on the expedition or the expense of Irish mails.

Frank Churchill returns on the earliest opportunity, and the ball at the Crown is to take place. A council of ladies and gentlemen is first summoned to pronounce on the rooms. Emma thinks the preliminary gathering absurdly large. It is no great compliment to be the confidential adviser of Mr. Weston when he takes everybody into his confidence.

Frank Churchill is almost as bad, restlessly rushing to the door to receive every new arrival, and providing umbrellas, under which Miss Bates and her niece may cross the street.

The Eltons, too, are there, Mrs. Elton eager to put in her word, and demonstrative as usual to Jane Fairfax. Emma wonders what Frank Churchill will think of the bride's manners. She is not long left in doubt.

"How do you like Mrs. Elton?" Emma asks him in a whisper.

"Not at all."

"You are ungrateful," said Emma, thinking of a flattering account she has heard the lady give his father of what she had been told of Frank.

"Ungrateful! What do you mean?" he cries quickly; then, changing from a frown to a smile, "No, do not tell me. I do not want to know what you mean. Where is my father?"

Emma can hardly understand Frank Churchill; he seems in an odd humour, but she makes no objection when he claims her for his partner, though she has to submit to stand second to Mrs. Elton, who opens the ball with Mr. Weston; yet Emma has always considered it her ball. It is almost enough to make her think of marrying. Still Emma is able to enjoy the dance, and be satisfied that Frank Churchill dances as

well as she had thought; though it is indubitable to her, and to her honour, the conviction rather affords her relief than wounds her vanity, that Frank Churchill thinks less of her than formerly. There is nothing like flirtation between them; they seem more like easy, cheerful friends than lovers.

What troubles Emma more than Frank Churchill's early secession as a lover is Mr. Knightley's not dancing. There he is, among the standers by, where he ought not to be. He ought to be dancing, not classing himself with the husbands, and fathers, and whist-players, who are pretending to feel an interest in the dance, till their rubbers are made up—so young as he looks, his tall, upright figure among the bulky forms and stooping shoulders of the elderly men.

He moves a few steps forward, and these few steps forward are enough to prove in how gentlemanlike a manner, with what natural grace he must have danced would he but take the trouble.

Indeed, Emma has always entertained the highest opinion of George Knightley's air and looks. She has told Harriet Smith, in trying to teach her simply what a well-bred man is like, that Mr. Knightley must be put out of count, he is so very superior to other people. Emma has never seen a man on whose whole person and address "gentleman" is more legibly written—and here Emma is right.

The ball rewards the anxious cares and incessant attentions of Mrs. Weston by going off happily, as old balls in county halls and ball-rooms of market-town inns had a knack of doing. People had fewer pleasures then, and were more easily entertained. They have left a pleasant flavour behind them—these early, social, eminently respectable country balls, when whitewashed walls were considered picturesquely hidden by a few common evergreens, and the mere sight of primitively chalked floors set young hearts dancing before the feet executed their "steps."

One incident impresses Emma. Harriet Smith is

sitting down—the only young lady without a partner. Mr. Elton is strolling about ostentatiously in her vicinity. Mrs. Weston, as in duty bound, tries to get him to dance. He professes his willingness, though getting an old married man, to become her partner. She points out to him a more fitting partner—the young lady who has sat down—Miss Smith. “Miss Smith! Oh, Miss Smith he has not observed. Mrs. Weston is extremely obliging, but his dancing days are over;” and a meaning smile passes between him and his wife.

This is the amiable, obliging Mr. Elton of other days! Emma can scarcely conceal her indignation, until she sees Mr. Knightley, whom Mr. Elton has joined, come forward and lead Harriet to the set. Never has Emma been more surprised, seldom more delighted. His dancing is as good as she anticipated, and she would have been tempted to think Harriet too lucky had it not been for what went before.

Emma expresses her gratification to Mr. Knightley later in the evening, and he increases it by telling her he has found Harriet Smith more conversable than he expected. She has some first-rate qualities which Mrs. Elton is totally without. An unpretending, single-minded, artless girl is infinitely to be preferred, by any man of sense and taste, to such a woman as Mrs. Elton.

They are interrupted by Mr. Weston calling on everybody to begin dancing again. “Come, Miss Woodhouse, Miss Otway, Miss Fairfax, what are you all doing? Come, Emma, set your companions the example. Everybody is lazy! everybody is asleep!”

“I am ready,” said Emma, “whenever I am wanted.”

“Whom are you going to dance with?” asks Mr. Knightley.

She hesitates a moment, and then replies, “With you, if you will ask me.”

“Will you?” said he, offering his hand.

“Indeed I will. You have shown that you can

dance, and you know we are not really so much brother and sister as to make it at all improper."

"Brother and sister!—no, indeed."

As ill luck will have it, the very next day Frank Churchill rescues Harriet Smith from the rudeness of a party of tramps and gipsies, and brings her on his arm to the nearest house (Hartfield); when, acting according to the instincts of such amiable but helpless heroines, Harriet immediately faints away.

Such a romantic adventure is not lost on Emma. It stimulates immensely her idle dream of how handsome a young couple Frank Churchill and Harriet would make, and how desirable it would be to bring them together.

Emma is not deterred from this last mischievous crochet, by a special revelation of Harriet's former foolish sentiments, which the girl considers herself called on to make. Mr. Elton has behaved so very badly to Harriet, that meek as the girl is, she can admire him at a humble distance no longer. She brings solemnly to Emma a little Tunbridge box, full of treasures which have become valueless, and which Harriet wishes Miss Woodhouse should see her destroy. There is a bit of court-plaster, left over from a piece with which Emma had made Harriet supply Mr. Elton, when he had happened to cut his hand in their service. There is also a stump of a pencil, which he flung aside after he had used up the lead in writing a recipe for spruce-beer, at Mr. Knightley's dictation.

Emma is lost between wonder and shame. Harriet's *auto da fé* has a double motive. She can no longer reverence Mr. Elton, and she can reverence another man, for whose sake she vaguely protests she is determined to remain single, since it would be utter presumption in her to think he could ever seek her out.

Emma gathers as much as this from her companion, and hesitates, with just a grain of dawning prudence, whether she ought to speak, or let Harriet's heroic resolution pass in silence.

But Harriet may think it unkind; besides, just a

little encouragement, judiciously administered, may not be amiss to check further confidences on Harriet's part. She is to be shown that her "dear Miss Woodhouse" does not disapprove of her aspirations, and at the same time made to comprehend that the old, improper, undesirable discussion of hopes and chances is not to be renewed. Therefore, without mentioning Frank Churchill's name, Emma tells Harriet that her feelings are natural and honourable to her, and at the same time bestows on her some excellent significant advice about not giving way to her feelings; on the contrary, she must let the gentleman's behaviour be the guide to her sentiments as well as to her conduct. But Emma rather undoes her teaching by volunteering an additional "He is your superior, no doubt, and there do seem objections and obstacles of a very serious nature; but yet, Harriet, more wonderful things have taken place; there have been matches of greater disparity."

At the end of the little lecture Harriet is at once grateful and submissive.

In the course of the summer, when, from Mr. and Mrs. Churchill's staying so near as Richmond, Frank Churchill can come often to Randalls, Mr. Knightley, who has taken an early dislike to the popular young man, learns to dislike him still more. He, Mr. Knightley, begins to suspect double dealing on Frank Churchill's part, double dealing which has to do with Emma Woodhouse and Jane Fairfax. It seems plain that Emma is his object. His own attentions coincide with his father's hints, and his step-mother's guarded silence. But while all their world is giving Frank Churchill to Emma, and Emma herself is secretly giving him to Harriet, Mr. Knightley learns to suspect him of an inclination to trifle with Jane Fairfax.

Mr. Knightley cannot read the riddle; but he is convinced that he perceives symptoms of intelligence between Frank Churchill and Jane Fairfax. There are not only betrayals of admiration for Jane—out of place in Emma's lover; but Mr. Knightley is persuaded, in

spite of his belief in Jane Fairfax's discretion, that there is a liking, even a private understanding, between the two visitors to Highbury.

A large party, including Mrs. Weston and Frank Churchill, Miss Bates and Jane Fairfax, and Mr. Knightley, have met by chance at Hartfield. Mr. Perry passes by on horseback.

"By-the-bye," said Frank Churchill to his step-mother, "what became of Mr. Perry's plan of setting up his carriage?"

Mrs. Weston answers she never heard of it.

He maintains she wrote him word of it three months before.

She declares it is impossible.

He insists that he remembers it perfectly. Mrs. Perry had told somebody, and was very happy about it. It had been her proposal, as she thought being out in bad weather did him harm.

Mrs. Weston cannot remember.

Then it must have been a dream, Frank Churchill turns round and suggests.

His father, who has not heard all the conversation, inquires if Perry is really going to set up a carriage. Mr. Weston is glad Perry can afford it. Did Frank have it from himself?

No, Frank replies, laughing, he seems to have had it from nobody. Of course, it must have been a dream. He dreams of everybody at Highbury, and when he has gone through his particular friends, then he begins dreaming of Mr. and Mrs. Perry.

His father comments on the odd coherence and probability of the dream, just what was likely to happen.

At last Miss Bates gets in her word. It is very singular—she does not mean that Mr. Frank Churchill may not have had such a dream, but there actually had been such a proposal. Mrs. Perry had come to Miss Bates one morning in great spirits, believing that she had prevailed in persuading her husband to have a carriage. It had been spoken of in confidence, but

the Coles had known of it. It was an extraordinary dream.

Mr. Knightley, who has been listening to the whole discussion, thinks he discerns confusion, suppressed and laughed away, in Frank Churchill's face. Mr. Knightley tries to see the expression of Jane Fairfax's, but in vain; at the same time he becomes aware that Frank Churchill is striving still more intently to catch her eye, with equal want of success.

During the evening Frank Churchill looks on a side-table for the little Knightleys' alphabets. It is a dull-looking evening, he says, fit for winter amusements; and he wishes to puzzle Emma as he did once before. When the box with the letters is brought, Frank and Emma begin quickly forming words. He pushes one before Jane Fairfax. She glances round the table and applies herself to it, discovers the word, and with a faint smile pushes away the letters. They are not mixed with the others, and Harriet Smith, who tries every heap without making anything of it, draws this one towards her and begins to puzzle over it.

Mr. Knightley is sitting next to Harriet, and she turns to him for help. Soon she proclaims with exultation, *blunder*. Jane Fairfax blushes.

Mr. Knightley connects the word and the blush with the dream. Yet how the delicacy of his favourite must have gone to sleep! He is grieved and angry. He suspects the game is being made a mere vehicle for trick and gallantry in Frank Churchill's hands.

Indignant and alarmed, Mr. Knightley continues to watch Frank Churchill. He prepares a short word for Emma, which she soon makes out. The two laugh over it, though she cries, "Nonsense, for shame!"

Mr. Knightley hears Frank Churchill say, with a glance towards Jane, "I will give it to her, shall I?"

Emma opposes the proceeding with laughing urgency. It is done, however. Mr. Knightley's keen curiosity assists him. He deciphers "*Dixon*," though he has not Jane Fairfax's key to the insinuation.

She is evidently displeased; looks up, and seeing herself watched, blushes deeply. She says, "I did not know that proper names were allowed," and pushes away the letters with even an angry spirit. She turns to her aunt as a signal that it is time to leave.

Mr. Knightley thinks he sees another collection of letters anxiously pushed towards her, and swept away by her unexamined. She is looking for her shawl afterwards, and Frank Churchill is searching also for it. It is growing dusk, the room is in confusion, and Mr. Knightley cannot tell how they part.

Mr. Knightley remains behind the others, to give Emma a warning. He asks her what is the peculiar sting of the last word given to her and Miss Fairfax? Why is it entertaining to the one, and distressing to the other?

Emma looks disconcerted. It is only a joke among themselves, she says.

The joke, he observes, gravely, seems confined to her and Mr. Churchill.

Mr. Knightley has not done. He tries, though disappointed by her silence, and painfully impressed with the conviction of her attachment to young Churchill, to furnish her with another hint. Is she perfectly acquainted with the degree of intimacy between the gentleman and lady they have been speaking of?

Perfectly, Emma tells him, with conviction.

Has she never received any reason to think he admired her, or she admired him.

Never, for the twentieth part of a moment. How could such an idea come into his head?

He has imagined he has seen something of attachment—looks which he did not believe were meant for the public.

Emma is very much amused. She rallies him on the flights of his fancy, which she would be sorry to check. There is no admiration. The appearances he has noticed proceed from peculiar circumstances she cannot explain. There is a good deal of nonsense in it all, but no two people can be farther from admiration

or attachment—at least, she presumes it is so with Jane Fairfax. As to the gentleman's indifference, Emma can answer for it. She is in gay spirits, which Mr. Knightley, in quitting her, does not at all share.

IV.

There are to be two expeditions to Box Hill, the one having given rise to the other. Mrs. Elton has organised an “exploring” picnic for her brother and sister, the Sucklings, of Maple Grove, with their barouche-landau. Emma and the Westons are to have something of the same description, but very different—quiet, unpretending, and elegant, in contrast to the fuss, ostentation, and regular eating and drinking of the first.

What is Emma's disgust to find that Mr. Weston, in his incorrigible good nature, has proposed to unite the two parties, since Mrs. Elton had been deprived of the company of the Sucklings. Chagrin or no chagrin, Emma has to submit; and Mrs. Elton is impatient to settle about the pigeon pies and cold lamb, when a lame carriage-horse overthrows all calculation, and threatens a delay of weeks.

“Is not this most vexatious, Knightley?” Mrs. Elton appeals, with her characteristic freedom, to the Squire of Donwell. “Such weather for exploring!”

“You had better explore Donwell,” suggests the forbearing gentleman; “that may be done without horses. Come and eat my strawberries; they are ripening fast.”

If he has spoken in jest, he has to act in earnest, for the proposal is caught at with delight. Not only so; Mrs. Elton elects herself queen of the feast. “I am lady patroness, you know. It is my party. I will bring my friends with me.”

But the host is quite capable of repelling aggression.

“I hope you will bring Elton,” he says, with courteous calmness; “but I will not trouble you to give any other invitation.”

Oh, he need not be afraid of delegating power to *her*. She is no young lady on preferment. Married women may be safely authorised. It is her party. Leave it all to her; she will invite the guests.

“No,” he calmly replies; “there is but one married woman in the world whom I can allow to invite what guests she pleases to Donwell, and that one is——”

“Mrs. Weston, I suppose?” interrupts the mortified Mrs. Elton.

“No—Mrs. Knightley; and till she is in being I will manage matters myself.”

Was ever rebuff better given, with equal judgment and moderation? In spite of her pushing self-assertion Mrs. Elton has to subside into a mere guest, with the comfort, however, of telling everybody that she has originated the party—that Knightley has given it to gratify her.

Mrs. Elton has insisted it is to be a morning scheme—quite a simple thing. She is to wear a large bonnet, and bring one of her little baskets hanging on her arm. They are to walk about the gardens, and gather the strawberries themselves, sit under trees, and have a table spread in the shade—everything as natural and simple as possible. Is not that his idea?

“Not quite;” he puts down her officiousness and affectation with quiet, well-bred humour. His idea of the simple and the natural would be to have the table spread in the dining-room; when they were tired of eating strawberries in the garden, there should be cold meat in the house.

She wishes she had a donkey, the thing would be for them all to come on donkeys—Jane, Miss Bates, and herself, with her *cara sposa* walking by. In country life a donkey is a sort of necessary; in summer there is dust and in winter there is dirt.

No doubt Mr. Knightley keeps his countenance

while he assures her Donwell Lane is never dusty, and at that season of the year it is dry. "Come on a donkey, however, if you prefer it; you can borrow Mrs. Cole's."

One reason for Mr. Knightley's declining to make his guests dine out of doors is, that he hopes to persuade Mr. Woodhouse to accompany Emma; and Mr. Woodhouse, who has not been at Donwell for two years, is open to persuasion.

In fact, everybody accepts his or her invitation, and as happy events—like sad ones—do not come singly, the lame horse recovers, so the party to Donwell is settled for the one day and the excursion to Box Hill for the next.

Mr. Weston, in the innocence of his heart, proposes to get his son Frank over from Richmond to attend both parties, and Mr. Knightley is obliged to say he will be glad to see the young man.

On a bright June day Mr. Woodhouse is safely driven over in the carriage, with one window down, to join in the *al fresco* party, by sitting in one of the most comfortable rooms in the Abbey where a fire has burnt all the morning, with Mrs. Weston to bear him company.

The few words representing Donwell Abbey have the usual effect of Jane Austen's spare but graphic, and perfectly unaffected, unlaboured descriptions. The house and grounds, under the brooding heat of the midsummer day, lie before us. The Abbey is an ample and irregular building, low-lying, with all the old neglect of "prospect," but having abundance of "timber" in rows and avenues, which neither fashion nor extravagance has rooted up. There are extensive gardens, stretching down to meadows washed by a stream. We can understand Emma Woodhouse's "honest pride and complacency" in her connection with the present and future proprietor of Donwell Abbey.

There is an unaccountable delay in the arrival of Frank Churchill, who was to have come on horseback, and some fears as to his horse are entertained.

In the meantime Mrs. Elton picks strawberries and talks for everybody—not excepting Miss Bates.

At last, when the various groups are resting on the seats in the shade, Emma cannot help overhearing Mrs. Elton urging on Jane Fairfax the acceptance of a situation as governess, offered to her through the Sucklings of Maple Grove.

Miss Fairfax is replying that she cannot fix on any arrangement till the return of the Campbells from Ireland.

Mrs. Elton is declining to be put off, and insisting on returning an answer in the affirmative by the next post.

Emma wonders how Jane can bear it, and even Jane looks vexed, speaks pointedly, and proposes to walk farther.

It is hot, and insensibly the company gather under the “delicious” shelter of a short avenue of limes, stretching beyond the gardens, and leading to nothing, unless to a view over a low stone wall, with high pillars, giving the appearance of an approach to the house where none had ever existed. The author objects to the sham, but expatiates—for her—on the view:—the distant bank, well clothed with wood—the Abbey Mill Farm, and its meadows—the river, making a curve around them. Jane Austen adds the short, significant sentence:—“It was a sweet view—sweet to the eye and mind. English verdure, English culture, English comfort, seen under a sun bright without being oppressive.”

In this walk, Emma is amused to find Mr. Knightley and Harriet Smith leading the way. It is an odd *tête-à-tête*, but Emma is glad to see it, and to meet Mr. Knightley’s smile when she joins the couple, and finds him giving Harriet information on modes of agriculture. The smile seems to say—“These are my own concerns. I have a right to talk on such subjects, without being suspected of introducing Robert Martin.”

The cold repast is over, and still Frank Churchill does not put in an appearance. His father and mother are anxious, but take refuge in attributing his absence

to some nervous attack of his aunt's. Emma looks at Harriet. That young lady is learning self-restraint; she behaves very well, betraying no emotion.

The party go out again to see some old fish-ponds, and, perhaps, to get as far as the clover, which is to be cut to-morrow.

Emma makes up her mind to remain indoors with her father. He has been very well entertained hitherto with the books of engravings, drawers of medals, cameos and shells brought out of the cabinets for his amusement. He has shown them all to Mrs. Weston; he will show them over again to Emma. The occupation is not so engrossing to Emma as to her father; she strolls into the hall, where she meets Jane Fairfax, coming quickly from the gardens, with a look of escape about her.

Jane hurriedly begs Emma to make her excuses if she should be missed. It is late. She ought to be at home. She does not want to say anything about going to give trouble. But will Miss Woodhouse kindly say, when the others come in, that she is gone?

Certainly, Emma says; but she remonstrates on Jane Fairfax's walking to Highbury alone.

It will not hurt her; she walks fast; she will be at home in twenty minutes.

Emma, who never forgets what is due to herself and others when she can render her neighbour a service, offers her father's servant; wishes to order the Hartfield carriage.

"Thank you, thank you!" Jane says, but resolutely declines, adding with agitation, "For *me* to be afraid of walking alone!—I, who may so soon have to guard others."

Emma's really kind heart is touched. She entreats to be allowed to lend the carriage, and urges that the heat is cause sufficient, since Jane is fatigued already.

Some of the bonds which fetter Jane's spirit give way; she and Emma are nearer being friends at that moment than they have ever been before. Jane confides so far in her companion: "I am fatigued," she owns,

“but it is not the sort of fatigue—quick walking will refresh me. Miss Woodhouse, we all know at times what it is to be wearied in spirits. Mine, I confess, are exhausted. The greatest kindness you can show me will be to let me have my own way, and only say that I am gone when it is necessary.”

Emma has not another word to say, and is full of commiseration, when the words that burst from Jane at parting, “Oh! Miss Woodhouse, the comfort of being sometimes alone!” betray the continued endurance the poor girl has to practise, even with some of those who love her best.

Jane has not been gone for a quarter of an hour, and Emma and her father have only reached the views of St. Mark’s Place, Venice, when Frank Churchill enters the room. His father and mother were right. A nervous seizure which had attacked Mrs. Churchill was the cause of his delay. He had almost given up the idea of coming, and if he had known how late he must be, and what he should have to suffer from the heat of the weather, he would not have started.

This is not like a speech which could come from the gallant Frank Churchill; but he continues to rail at the heat and at his own sufferings—sitting at the greatest possible distance from the small remnant of Mr. Weston’s fire, and looking deplorable—though Emma takes it upon her to assure him, somewhat exasperatingly, perhaps, that he will soon be cooler if he will sit still.

As soon as he is cooler he will go back again. He could ill be spared, only such a point had been made of his coming. They will all be going presently. He has met one of the party as he came—madness in such weather.

Emma can come to no other conclusion than that Frank Churchill is out of humour. Some people are always cross when they are hot. Eating and drinking often cures such incidental complaints. She obligingly recommends him to take some refreshment, and points out the dining-room door.

No, he is not hungry; eating would only make him

hotter ; but he thinks better of it and goes off, muttering something about spruce beer.*

Emma is glad she has done being in love with him ; but Harriet has a sweet temper.

He comes back with his good manners, if not his good spirits, restored, enters into the Woodhouses' occupation, but announces, *apropos* of sketches and Switzerland, that he hopes soon to go abroad. He wants a change. He is sick of England.

He is sick of prosperity, his lively companion tells him ; but she does not think he is so miserable as when he arrived. Let him eat and drink a little more. Another slice of cold meat, another draught of madeira and water, and he will do very well.

No, he will sit by her ; she is his best cure.

They are going to Box Hill to-morrow. It is not Switzerland, but it will be something for a young man so much in want of a change.

No, certainly not ; he will go home in the cool of the evening.

But he may come back again in the cool of the morning.

No, it would not be worth while. If he came he would be cross.

Then pray let him stay at Richmond.

But if he does, he will be crosser still. He could never bear to think of them all enjoying themselves without him.

He must settle these difficulties, and choose his own degree of crossness. She will press him no more.

Chaff was not a slang word early in the century. But how charmingly Jane Austen can chaff by the lips of more than one of her heroines ! And what arch, sweet, perfectly womanly and ladylike chaff it is !

Frank Churchill† is very wrong, and yet there is a

* In how many country houses in England is spruce beer to be found to-day ?

† The position of Frank Churchill—dependent on his uncle and aunt, bound to humour their whims and wait on their pleasure—seems never to have struck Jane Austen as unmanly and undesirable.

grain of excuse for him when he says to Emma at parting, "Well, if *you* wish me to stay and join the party, I will."

Emma smiles her acceptance of the concession, very nearly as indefensibly.

There is another fine day for Box Hill; but though the scenery is much admired, the excursion somehow is not successful.

There is a want of spirit and a want of union which cannot be got over. The Eltons walk by themselves, Mr. Knightley takes charge of Miss Bates and Jane Fairfax, Frank Churchill escorts Emma and Harriet. Mr. Weston tries in vain to bring everybody together, and make the thing harmonious.

At first it is downright dullness to Emma, for Frank Churchill is actually stupid, and, of course, Harriet is no better. They are both insufferable. It would have been well if they had continued dull, though Emma flatters herself it is a great deal better when they all sit down together, and Frank grows talkative and gay, making Emma his first object; while she, glad to be enlivened, and not sorry to be flattered, affords him every encouragement, in forgetfulness, it must be confessed, of what Harriet's feelings may be. But then Harriet is the most placid of human beings, the most confiding of friends.

Emma means nothing: she even believes that he means nothing; but in the opinion of most people present only one English word, "flirtation," could describe their behaviour. "Mr. Frank Churchill and Miss Woodhouse flirted together excessively" might be the report sent off in a letter to Maple Grove by one lady, to Ireland by another. Yet it is really because Emma is less—not more—happy than usual, that she lays herself open to the imputation.

Frank Churchill piles up his compliments, and Emma parries them merrily. The rest of the company fall into silence, as if to constitute themselves an audience for the genteel comedy, until Emma objects aloud to

talking nonsense for the entertainment of seven silent people.

"They shall talk," Frank ordains. "Ladies and gentlemen, I am desired by Miss Woodhouse to say that she desires to know what you are all thinking of?"

There is a little flutter of amusement here, and indignation there.

Mr. Knightley's answer is most distinct, and most to the purpose: "Is Miss Woodhouse sure she would like to hear what we are all thinking of?"

"Oh, no! no!" cries Emma, laughing as carelessly as she can; "upon no account in the world. Let me hear anything rather than what you are thinking of."

"It will not do," whispers Frank to Emma; "they are most of them affronted. I will attack them with more address. Ladies and gentlemen, I am ordered by Miss Woodhouse to say that she waives her right of knowing exactly what you may all be thinking of, and only requires something very entertaining, from each of you, in a general way. Here are seven of you besides myself (who, she is pleased to say, am very entertaining already), and she only demands from each of you either one thing very clever, be it prose or verse, original or repeated; or two things moderately clever; or three things very dull indeed; and she engages to laugh heartily at them all."

"Oh, very well," exclaims Miss Bates; "then I need not be uneasy. 'Three things very dull indeed!' That will just do for me, you know. I shall be sure to say three dull things as soon as ever I open my mouth, sha'n't I?" (looking round with the most good-humoured dependence on everybody's assent). "Do not you all think I shall?"

Emma cannot resist. "Ah, ma'am, but there may be a difficulty. Pardon me, but you will be limited as to the number—only three at once."

Miss Bates, deceived by the mock ceremony of the manner, does not immediately catch the meaning; but

when it bursts on her, it cannot anger, though a slight blush shows that it can pain her.

“Ah! well, to be sure! Yes, I see what she means,” turning to Mr. Knightley, “and I will try to hold my tongue. I must make myself very disagreeable, or she would not have said such a thing to an old friend.”

Mr. Weston volunteers a conundrum, which is not very clever, but which he is sure Emma will not guess. What two letters stand for perfection?—‘M’ and ‘A’—Em—ma.”

It may be a very indifferent piece of wit, but Emma finds a great deal to laugh at and enjoy in it.

Mr. Knightley says, gravely, “This explains the sort of clever thing that is wanted, and Mr. Weston has done very well for himself; but he must have knocked up everybody else. *Perfection* should not have come quite so soon.”

Mrs. Elton is swelling with resentment. “I really cannot attempt—I am not at all fond of the sort of thing. I have a great deal of vivacity in my own way, but I must really be allowed to judge when to speak, and when to hold my tongue. Pass us, if you please, Mr. Churchill! pass Mr. E., Knightley, Jane, and myself. We have nothing clever to say—not one of us?”

“Yes, yes, pray pass *me*,” adds her husband, with a sort of sneering consciousness. “I have nothing to say that can entertain Miss Woodhouse, or any other young lady. An old married man—quite good for nothing. Shall we walk, Augusta?”

“With all my heart. I am really tired of exploring so long on one spot. Come, Jane, take my other arm.”

Jane declines, and the husband and wife walk off.

“Happy couple!” says Frank Churchill, as soon as they are out of hearing; “how well they suit one another! Very lucky, marrying, as they did, upon an acquaintance formed only in a public place. They only knew each other, I think, a few weeks, at Bath.”

Then, suddenly becoming serious, he volunteers his emphatic opinion that there can be no knowledge of a person's disposition in such circumstances, finishing with the sentence, "How many a man has committed himself on a short acquaintance, and rued it all the rest of his life!"

Jane Fairfax wishes to speak. "Such things do occur, undoubtedly." She is stopped by a cough.

"You were speaking?" said Frank Churchill.

She recovers her voice. "I was only going to observe that though such unfortunate circumstances do sometimes occur both to men and women, I cannot imagine them to be very frequent. A hasty and imprudent attachment may arise, but there is generally time to recover from it afterwards. I would be understood to mean that it can be only weak, irresolute characters (whose happiness must be always at the mercy of chance) who will suffer an unfortunate acquaintance to be an inconvenience, an oppression for ever."

He makes no answer, merely looks and bows in submission, then resumes his flirtation with Emma, more furiously than before. Will she choose a wife for him? He is sure he will like anybody fixed on by her. He is in no hurry. Emma may adopt her, educate her.

"And make her like myself!" cries the heedless Emma.

By all means, if she can.

She undertakes the commission in high glee. He shall have a charming wife.

He only stipulates for two things. She must be lively, and she must have hazel eyes. He will go abroad for a couple of years, and when he returns he will come to her for a wife.

This jesting commission appeals to Emma's special weakness. Will not Harriet be the very creature described—barring the liveliness and the hazel eyes—either sops of personal flattery thrown in for Emma herself, whose appetite for that commodity is not small, or words

spoken at random? Might not Harriet be in his thoughts when he referred the education of his wife to Emma?

“Now, ma’am,” said Jane to her aunt, “shall we join Mrs. Elton?”

Miss Bates is ready, so is Mr. Knightley; it seems, to use a homely expression, that their absence will be better than their company.

Yet, after the rest of the party are gone, the pitch to which the young man’s spirits rise becomes almost unpleasant to Emma. She is fairly tired of fun and flattery. She welcomes the appearance of the servants and the ordering of the carriages.

But Emma is not to escape without the rebuke she deserves. She finds Mr. Knightley seeking to speak with her where nobody can hear. He says, “Emma, I must once more speak to you as I have been used to do—a privilege rather endured than allowed, perhaps; but I must still use it. I cannot see you acting wrong without a remonstrance. How could you be so unfeeling to Miss Bates? How could you be so insolent in your wit to a woman of her character, age, and situation? Emma, I had not thought it possible.”

“Emma recollected, blushed, was sorry, but tried to laugh it off. ‘Nay, how could I help saying what I did? Nobody could have helped it. It was not so very bad. I daresay she did not understand me.’”

“‘I assure you she did. She felt your full meaning. She has talked of it since. I wish you could have heard how she talked of it—with what candour and generosity. I wish you could have heard her honouring your forbearance, in being able to pay her such attentions as she was for ever receiving from yourself and your father, when her society must be so irksome.’”

“‘Oh!’ cried Emma, ‘I know there is not a better creature in the world; but you must allow that what is good and what is ridiculous are most unfortunately blended in her.’”

“‘They are blended,’ said he, ‘I acknowledge, and

were she prosperous I could allow much for the occasional prevalence of the ridiculous over the good. Were she a woman of fortune, I would leave her every harmless absurdity to take its chance. I would not quarrel with you for any liberties of manner. Were she equal in situation—but, Emma, consider how far this is from being the case. She is poor; she has sunk from the comforts she was born to; and if she live to old age must probably sink more. Her situation should secure your compassion. It was badly done, indeed! You, whom she had known from an infant, whom she had seen grow up from a period when her notice was an honour—to have you now, in thoughtless spirits, and the pride of the moment, laugh at her, humble her—and before her niece, too, and before others, many of whom (certainly *some*) would be entirely guided by *your* treatment of her. This is not pleasant to you, Emma, and it is very far from pleasant to me; but I must, I will, tell you truths while I can; satisfied with proving myself your friend by very faithful counsel, and trusting that you will, some time or other, do me greater justice than you can do now.’”

Nothing can be juster, manlier, more faithful than the remonstrance. It goes straight to Emma’s heart. Mr. Knightley is quite mistaken in imagining that she cannot appreciate it at its true worth. In the middle of her contrition and distress, she is eager to show him that she feels no sullenness. Not the least of her vexation is occasioned by her having failed, in the hurry of the moment, to acknowledge the true friendship of his tone, and by their having exchanged no friendly leave-taking.

How could she have been so brutal, so cruel to Miss Bates; how could she have exposed herself to such an ill opinion in any one she valued, and then to suffer him to go without one word of gratitude and common kindness?

Truly, Emma is candid, good, and gracious, in spite of her worst faults, when these are contrasted with the intolerable flippancy, the selfish heartlessness of some

so-called heroines. We are sorry for her as she drives away with Harriet, the tears stealing down Emma's cheeks in the comparative privacy of such companionship.

That scene at Box Hill, with its lights and shades, its apparent comedy and hidden tragedy, its diversity of characters and feelings so finely indicated, is the best in the book.

"Who breaks—pays." Emma has, next morning, as the inevitable result of her regardless folly the day before, to face a host of wretched reflections. Girl-like, she is in haste to atone, as if atonement were always easy or possible. She will go that very day to the Bateses, and, though she cannot speak out her compunction, she will, from this time henceforth, do all that is in her power to make up for her offence, by lavishing friendly kindness on the family.

She fears for a moment she is to be refused admittance, but it is only Jane Fairfax who is retreating from the visitor. The mother and daughter are as civil and humble as usual, though it pains Emma to recognise, at first, that Miss Bates is less cheerful and easy in her volubility.

But Emma's special friendliness soon reconciles the good old lady to herself and all the world. Emma hears the present trouble poured forth in the usual jumble of ideas and sentences. The substance is that Jane has suddenly made up her mind to accept the situation Mrs. Elton hunted up for her.

Emma is sincerely interested, and sorry for them all, and expresses her feelings earnestly.

"So very kind," replies the grateful Miss Bates, "but you are always kind."

This is certainly heaping coals of fire on Emma's head. She hastens to ask where Miss Fairfax is going.

"To Mrs. Smallridge—charming woman—to have the charge of three little girls—delightful children."

Jane will be only four miles from Maple Grove; but unfortunately Mrs. Smallridge is in a great hurry, and Jane is to leave in a fortnight.

On Emma's return home, she finds Mr. Knightley with her father, looking in upon him before leaving for London, and wishing to learn if they have any messages for John and Isabella, with whom he is going to spend a few days.

Emma had not heard of the visit, though Mr. Knightley says he had been thinking of it for some time; and she is certain he has not forgiven her, he looks so unlike himself.

As they stand talking, Mr. Woodhouse begins to inquire for Mrs. Bates and her daughter, with whom Emma has been—she is so attentive to them.

At this peculiarly *mal apropos* praise, Emma's colour rises, while she looks at Mr. Knightley and shakes her head.

It seems as if he instantly understands all that has been passing in her heart. He looks at her with a glow of regard, he takes her hand—she is not sure afterwards that she did not offer it, but he takes it, presses it, and is certainly on the point of carrying it to his lips, when, from some fancy or other, he suddenly lets it go.

He would have judged better, she thinks, if he had not stopped, but she can at least recall the attempt with great satisfaction. It speaks such perfect amity. The next moment he is gone.

The following day brings news from Richmond which throws everything else into the shade. An express had arrived at Randalls to announce the death of Mrs. Churchill. The great Mrs. Churchill (the tyrannical rich woman who has demanded such deference from both husband and nephew) is no more.

Jane Austen has a most pertinent reflection on the event and some of its consequences. "It was felt as such things must be felt. Everybody had a degree of gravity and sorrow; tenderness towards the departed, solicitude for the surviving friends; and, in a reasonable time, curiosity to know where she would be buried. Goldsmith tells us, that when lovely woman stoops to folly, she has nothing to do but to die; and when she

stoops to be disagreeable, it is equally to be recommended as a clearer of ill fame. Mrs. Churchill, after being disliked at least twenty-five years, was now spoken of with compassionate allowances. In one point she was fully justified. She had never been admitted before to be seriously ill. The event acquitted her of all the fancifulness, and all the selfishness of imaginary complaints."

Emma soon begins to consider that now an attachment on Frank's part to Harriet Smith will have nothing to encounter.

Mr. Churchill, independent of his wife, is feared by nobody; an easy, guidable man—to be persuaded into anything by his nephew.

Harriet again behaves admirably, and betrays no agitation. Emma is delighted to have this evidence of her friend's strengthened character.

In the interval, before anything can be known of Frank Churchill's future, Emma longs to do the little she can to compensate for her neglect of Jane Fairfax, and for the idle, unworthy fancies of which she begins to feel thoroughly ashamed. But Jane is not so accessible to advances as her aunt is. Emma would have Jane spend a day at Hartfield before she quits Highbury, and writes to invite her. The invitation is refused, and a message sent that "Miss Fairfax is not well enough to write."

Mr. Perry, in visiting the Woodhouses, confirms the accounts of Jane Fairfax's illness. She is seriously indisposed, suffering from headaches, with nervous fever, and her appetite is gone. He doubts the possibility of her going to Mrs. Smallridge's at the time fixed. He is uneasy about Jane Fairfax, though there are no absolutely alarming symptoms. Her present home is unfavourable to a nervous disorder.

Emma's regrets and self-reproaches increase. She is eager to be useful; she writes again, with the greatest tact and feeling she can command, and proposes to take Jane for a drive, at any hour she will name.

Once more a verbal message is returned:—"Miss

Fairfax's compliments and thanks, but is quite unequal to any exercise."

Emma thinks her note deserves more, but cannot be angry under the circumstances. She would have tried personal persuasion, but only Miss Bates comes to the carriage door to excuse her niece.

Hearing of Mr. Perry's recommendation of nourishing food, Emma returns home, and calling the housekeeper, despatches some arrowroot of very superior quality, with a most friendly note to Miss Bates. In half an hour the arrowroot is returned with a thousand thanks from Miss Bates, but "dear Jane" would not be satisfied till it was sent back. It is a thing she cannot take, and she insists on her aunt saying that her niece is not in want of anything.

Such obduracy is unconquerable, and when Emma hears that Jane Fairfax had been wandering about the meadows at some distance from Highbury on the afternoon of the day on which she declined carriage exercise, Emma is forced to see that Jane is resolved to receive no kindness from *her*. She is sorry and mortified, but she has the comfort of thinking Mr. Knightley would have understood and appreciated her motives.

Ten days after Mrs. Churchill's death, Mr. Weston comes himself one morning to Hartfield to beg Emma to accompany him to Randalls. Mrs. Weston is not ill, but she has something very particular to say to her friend. He will not tell beforehand what has happened, but on the road he is led into such explanations as "The most unaccountable business;" "she will break it to you better than I can."

At the last words Emma stops short in terror. Something must have happened in Brunswick Square (where Isabella lives). Which of them is it? She must hear at once.

It is only on his solemnly assuring her that what has occurred has nothing to do with the name of Knightley that she is relieved, and walks on. "Who is that gentleman on horseback?" she asks, speak-

ing in order to keep up a conversation on indifferent topics.

It is one of the Otways. Not Frank. She will not see him. He is half way to Windsor by this time.

Has his son been with them, then?

Oh, yes! Did she not know? Well, never mind.

Mrs. Weston looks ill, and much disturbed, and no sooner is she left alone with Emma than the girl begs affectionately to be informed what unpleasant event has befallen her friends.

"Have you no idea?" said Mrs. Weston, in a trembling voice.

Emma does guess it has to do with Mr. Frank Churchill.

She is right, Mrs. Weston confesses, resuming her work, and fixing her eyes upon it. He had been there that morning on a most extraordinary errand. He came to speak to his father—to announce an attachment.

Emma thinks first of herself and then of Harriet.

"More than an attachment—a positive engagement. What will you say, Emma, what will anybody say, when it is known that Frank Churchill and Miss Fairfax are engaged—nay, that they have been long engaged?"

Emma even jumped with surprise and consternation. Jane Fairfax! Mrs. Weston is not serious. She does not mean it?

"You may well be amazed," returns Mrs. Weston, steadily averting her eyes; "you may well be amazed."

There had been a solemn engagement between them ever since October, formed at Weymouth, and kept a secret from everybody, not a creature knowing it but themselves, neither the Campbells, nor her family, nor his.

Emma scarcely hears what is said. Her mind is divided between two overwhelming ideas—her own former conversations with him about Jane Fairfax, and poor Harriet. "Well," she exclaims at last, "this is a circumstance I must think of at least half a day before I can comprehend it. What! engaged to her all the winter, before either of them came to Highbury?"

“It has hurt me very much,” said Mrs. Weston ; “it has hurt his father equally ; some part of his conduct we cannot excuse.”

Emma cannot pretend to misunderstand the speaker’s meaning. On the contrary, she is eager and glad to remove this load from the Westons’ minds. In a few words she explains that Frank Churchill’s attentions to her have not produced the effect his father and mother feared. It seems too good news to be true ; but Emma confirms her assertions of indifference by owning there was a time when she did like him, but that time soon passed—why, she cannot tell, and she has not cared about him for the last three months.

Mrs. Weston kisses her, and cries with joy and thankfulness. On this point she and her husband have been wretched. They had warmly wished the match, and heartily believed in a mutual attachment. They have been miserable on Emma’s account.

Emma is grateful for her escape, but she is by no means inclined to excuse the offender. She turns, with her usual frankness and fervour, to protest against his conduct. “What right had he to come among us with affections and faith engaged, and manners so very disengaged ? What right had he to endeavour to please—as he certainly did—to distinguish any young woman, as he certainly did, while he really belonged to another ? How could *she* bear such behaviour ? Composure, with a witness ! to look on while repeated attentions were offering to another woman before her face, and not resent it.”

Now that Mrs. Weston’s mind is so agreeably relieved, she seeks to find an apology for the delinquents.

Emma will not even listen to a reminder of his many good qualities. “Mrs. Smallridge, too !” she is exclaiming ; “Jane actually on the point of going as governess ! What could he mean by such horrible indelicacy ? To suffer her to engage herself—to suffer her even to think of such a measure !”

But Mrs. Weston is able to clear her stepson on this point—he knew nothing of it. There had been misunderstandings. Jane had taken a private resolution, which had somehow come round to Frank only the day before ; it had determined him to come forward at once, own all to his uncle, and throw himself on his kindness. Had Mrs. Churchill lived there could hardly have been a hope of the family's consent ; with her influence gone everything had been easy. Frank was off with the morning light to Highbury, went straight to the Bateses, and then came on to his father's. He had to return immediately to his uncle, but was to write in full to his stepmother.

Emma remarks dryly, she supposes they will immediately get reconciled to the idea, and she wishes the couple happy. But she will always think it a very abominable system of hypocrisy, deceit, espionage, and treachery. They must take the consequence, if they have heard each other spoken of in a way not perfectly agreeable.

Mrs. Weston congratulates herself that she has always thought so highly of Jane Fairfax, she can never have said ill of her to Frank.

Emma, smarting under her own consciousness, can only say her friend is in luck. But she is able to set worthy Mr. Weston's mind at rest at once, by congratulating him, without the smallest difficulty, on having the loveliest and most accomplished young woman in England for his daughter-in-law.

“ Harriet ! poor Harriet ! ” There is the next torment. How is Emma to break such news a second time to her friend ? Mr. Knightley's words begin to sound prophetic—“ Emma, you have been no friend to Harriet Smith. ”

There is no necessity for farther solicitude on Jane Fairfax's behalf. Her days of insignificance and evil are over. Now Emma can comprehend why her late offers of assistance and regard have been repulsed. In Jane's eyes she has been a successful rival. In that

light an airing in the Hartfield carriage would have been the rack, and arrowroot from the Hartfield store-room must have proved poison.

But Harriet. Frank Churchill's engagement is to be still kept a strict secret during the family's period of mourning for Mrs. Churchill; however, there must be an explanation, on Harriet's account.

Emma is reflecting Mrs. Weston's agitation on her own behalf, when Harriet comes in, with the eager exclamation, "Is not this the oddest news that ever was about Jane Fairfax?" Mr. Weston has told her as the greatest secret. "How very odd!"

Harriet's behaviour is so extremely odd, that Emma does not know what to make of it. She may spare her pity, if Harriet's self-command has reached this height. Harriet is even asking, with the utmost coolness, if Miss Woodhouse had ever guessed that Mr. Frank Churchill was in love with Miss Fairfax?

"Never!" protests Emma; "you may be sure of that. If I had, I should have cautioned you accordingly."

"Me!" cries Harriet, colouring; "why should you caution me? You do not think that I care about Mr. Frank Churchill?"

If it is not Frank, who can it be? Is Emma to suppose——?

But Harriet is quite ready to explain herself in the middle of her agitation. They have agreed not to name him; but he is so infinitely superior to everybody else, that Harriet does not see how she could have been thought to mean any other person. Mr. Frank Churchill, indeed! Harriet does not know who would look at him in the presence of the other. And she has received the encouragement from Emma herself, when it would have seemed too much presumption almost, to dare to think of him—that more wonderful things had happened—there had been matches of greater disparity.

"Harriet," cries Emma, "let us understand each other now, without the possibility of further mistake—are you speaking of Mr. Knightley?"

To be sure she is—she never could have an idea of anybody else.

Emma brings herself to ask, has Harriet any idea of Mr. Knightley's returning her affection?

"Yes," replies Harriet modestly, but not fearfully, "I must say I have."

Emma is silent, in the bitterness of her heart. Why is it so much worse that Harriet should be in love with Mr. Knightley than with Mr. Churchill? Why is the evil so dreadfully increased by Harriet's having some hope of a return of her love? There can only be one explanation—it darts through Emma's mind with the swiftness of an arrow's flight—Mr. Knightley must marry no one but herself.

Her own conduct, as well as her own heart, lies bare before her. How inconsiderate, how indelicate, how irrational, how unfeeling has been her behaviour! And if she has acted improperly by Harriet, she may have done still worse by Mr. Knightley. He had said she had been no friend to Harriet Smith. She may prove to have been his worst enemy, if it be possible that his association with Harriet can bring him to demean himself to make a girl, so inferior to him in every respect, his wife.

But Emma must not make Harriet suffer for her fault. Emma is always courageous in taking upon herself the heaviest penalty for her misdoings.

She gently questions Harriet as to her reason, besides the assurance Emma has given her, under a misconception, of Mr. Knightley's growing regard for her. And as Harriet, with great *naïveté*, brings forward the different proofs—from his dancing with her at the ball at the Crown, down to his seeking her out, and walking with her at his own party at Donwell, including the change in his tone, his increased kindness, the pains he takes to ascertain her opinions in conversation, even to an effort to discover whether her affections are still disengaged, Emma, sick at heart, is compelled to admit there is some truth in what Harriet alleges. Emma

herself has been struck with the additional notice which Mr. Knightley bestows on Harriet Smith, and several times lately he has praised her cordially to Emma.

If one could go so far as to conceive Mr. Knightley choosing a partner for life so inferior to him in understanding, as well as in every other desirable recommendation, then it might be that he would marry Harriet, though the vision of her as the mistress of Donwell Abbey humbles Emma for its master's sake even more than for her own. If she had only not brought the two together; if she had but left Harriet to marry the unexceptionable young man who would have made her happy in the line of life to which she belonged—in which she ought to have remained. Mr. Knightley and Harriet Smith! It is a union to distance every wonder of the kind. The attachment of Frank Churchill and Jane Fairfax becomes commonplace and threadbare—presents no disparity by comparison. Such elevation on Harriet's side—such debasement on Mr. Knightley's. It is impossible. And yet it is very far from impossible. Is it a new circumstance for a man of first-rate abilities to be captivated by very inferior powers? Is it new for one, perhaps too busy to seek, to be the prize of a girl who will seek him?

Still Emma can be honourably fair to Harriet, and gentle with her. But she does faintly suggest that Mr. Knightley may be paying attention to Harriet with Mr. Martin's interest in view.

But Harriet rejects the suggestion with such spirit—she hopes she knows better now than to care for Mr. Martin, or to be suspected of it—and so holds Emma to her former advice to observe the gentleman's behaviour, and let it be the rule of hers (Harriet's); that, though it requires a great exertion, Emma brings herself to say Mr. Knightley is the last man in the world who would intentionally give any woman the idea of his feeling more for her than he really did.

In return for the guarded speech, Harriet could have worshipped her reluctant friend.

Emma seeks to weigh her regard for Mr. Knightley—to ascertain its beginning and strength. Till she was threatened with its loss, she had never known how much her happiness was dependent upon him. She had long been first with him, for there was only Isabella to compete with her in his affections; and she had been aware that she came before her sister with him. She had known she was dear to him; and in her self-confident security, and her delusions and fancies, she had never so much as suspected that to be first and dearest with Mr. Knightley, or to have another woman supplant her, constituted the fulness or the blankness, the gladness or the sadness, of her lot.

Tried as Emma is, her good sense does not forsake her; she will not believe in her own and Mr. Knightley's loss, so long as unbelief is possible. To continue to discuss the matter with Harriet is intolerable. She contrives to keep Harriet away from Hartfield.

A visit from Mrs. Weston is a distraction to Emma's cares, though it is no longer of the importance it would have been before the last miserable discovery.

Mrs. Weston comes with the news of the Westons' visit to the Bateses. Very great had been the evident distress and confusion of *the* lady, while the innocent satisfaction and delight of her grandmother and aunt had been almost touching.

Jane Fairfax had spoken with energy to Mrs. Weston on the misery she had suffered during the concealment for so many months. This was one of her expressions:—"I will not say that since I have entered into the engagement I have not had some happy moments, but I can say that I have never known the blessing of one tranquil hour." *

She had added:—"After all the punishment that misconduct can bring, it is still not less misconduct. The fortunate turn that everything has taken, and the kindness I am now receiving, is what my conscience tells me

* A striking illustration of what a good woman must suffer from such a false step as that which Jane Fairfax had taken.

ought not to be. Do not imagine, madam, that I was taught wrong. I shall dread making the story known to Colonel Campbell."

Emma is softened. "Poor girl! her affection must have overpowered her judgment."

Mrs. Weston's communications increase Emma's esteem, compassion, and sense of past injustice to Jane Fairfax. To all her other regrets and sources of self-reproach is added the sense of having missed, by a feeling of jealousy, the friendship with Jane—marked out by equality of birth, abilities, and education, which all her friends had proposed for her, and which might have been of benefit to both girls. Instead, Emma had preferred the unsuitable, humble companionship and worship of Harriet Smith; and what has come of it?

V.

A cold, stormy rain sets in, stripping the July trees and shrubs. Mr. Woodhouse, whose spirits are easily affected by the weather, is more than usually dependent on cheering, at the very time that visitors fail. Emma, struggling to do a loving daughter's part, cannot prevent herself from foreseeing how much more deserted Hartfield must soon prove. Mrs. Weston's baby will engross her, and supersede even Emma in her friend's affections. Both Frank Churchill and Jane Fairfax will be gone from Highbury; and—far worst change of all, Mr. Knightley will be no longer walking in at all hours, when he has Harriet to keep him company at Donwell. And if he can be content with Harriet, only one reflection can increase Emma's wretchedness—that it has been all her own work.

The rainy clouds clear away the following afternoon, and Emma seizes the opportunity of Mr. Perry's calling and sitting with her father, to stroll out into the

shrubbery—where the first thing she sees is Mr. Knightley passing the garden gate and coming towards her. She had not heard of his return from London, but she must be collected and calm. (Emma is a girl who possesses much self-respect and womanly dignity.)

Mr. Knightley, on his side, does not look cheerful; but he is perfectly capable of conversing quietly, as he turns and walks with her.

Emma fancies that he wishes to talk to her of Harriet, and shrinks from leading the way in the conversation, but braces herself to follow when he takes the initiative. It is only his recurring fits of silence she cannot bear.

She considers; tries to smile, and refers to some news for him to hear, which ought to surprise him.

If she means Miss Fairfax and Frank Churchill, he has heard that already, he tells her shortly.

Emma is relieved, but as she reminds him that he had once tried to give her a caution, and she wishes she had attended to it, her voice sinks and she sighs, adding, "I seem doomed to blindness."

She suddenly finds her arm drawn within his and pressed, and hears him fairly faltering, "Time, my dearest Emma, time will heal the wound—the feelings of the warmest friendship—indignation—abominable scoundrel!"

Emma * must undeceive him instantly.

"You are very kind, but you are mistaken. I am not in want of that sort of compassion. I was very foolishly tempted to say and do many things which may well lay me open to unpleasant conjectures; but I have no other reason to regret that I was not in the secret earlier."

"Emma," he cries eagerly, are you indeed——" but checking himself, "No, no. I understand you: forgive me. I am pleased that you can even say so much. He

* Emma has as much trouble in convincing her friends that she is not attached to Frank Churchill, as Elizabeth Bennet found in persuading her relations that she returned the affection of Darcy.

is no object of regret. I could only be certain there was a preference. He is a disgrace to the name of man, and is he to be rewarded with that sweet young woman?"

Emma has to renew her protestations, striving for the old liveliness to carry off her sense of awkwardness.

"I am in a very extraordinary situation. I cannot let you continue in your error; and yet, perhaps, since my manners gave such an impression, I have as much reason to be ashamed of confessing that I never have been at all attached to the person we are speaking of, as it might be natural for a woman to feel in confessing exactly the reverse. But I never have."

Her companion says nothing, and Emma, to convince him, recapitulates earnestly the true particulars of the case—Frank's being the son of Mr. Weston, his having been continually at Hartfield; the fact that his attentions flattered her, even after she had come to look on them as a habit, a trick, nothing that had called for seriousness on her part. He had imposed on her, still he had not taken her in, in the serious meaning of the words.

Mr. Knightley grows cooler, and admits he may have underrated Frank Churchill. With such a woman he has a chance. He is a fortunate man, at three-and-twenty to have drawn a prize. Everything turns out well for him. "He meets with a young woman at a watering-place, gains her affection, cannot even weary her by negligent treatment; and had he and all his family sought round the world for a perfect wife for him, they could not have found her superior. His aunt is in the way. His aunt dies. He has only to speak; his friends are eager to promote his happiness. He has used everybody ill, and they are all delighted to forgive him."

"You speak as if you envied him," exclaims Emma.

"And I do envy him, Emma. In one respect he is the object of my envy."

Emma can say no more; they seem within half a

sentence of Harriet. Emma wishes to change the subject, and speaks of the children in Brunswick Square.

But he is too fast for her. "You will not ask me what is the point of envy. Emma, I must tell you what you will not ask, though I may wish it unsaid the next moment."

"Oh, then don't speak of it; don't speak of it," she cries impulsively; "take a little time; consider; don't commit yourself."

"Thank you!" he said, in a tone of deep mortification.

Emma cannot bear to give him pain. He is wishing, perhaps, to consult her. She may help him; give just praise to Harriet, represent to him his independence.

Emma refuses to go in, and as they take another turn, says hurriedly, "I stopped you ungraciously just now, Mr. Knightley; but if you have any wish to speak to me openly, as a friend, you may command me. I will hear whatever you like, I will tell you exactly what I think."

"As a friend," repeats Mr. Knightley. No, he has no wish. But why should he hesitate when he has gone too far for concealment? He accepts her offer as a friend. Will she tell him if he has any chance of ever succeeding? He stops to look the question, and the expression of his eyes overpowers her.

"My dearest Emma, for dearest you will always be to me, whatever the event of this hour's conversation, tell me at once; say 'no' if it is to be said."

She can really say nothing.

"'You are silent,' he cries, with great animation, 'absolutely silent! at present I ask no more.'

"Emma was almost ready to sink under the agitation of this moment. The dread of being awakened from the happiest dream was perhaps the most prominent feeling.

"'I cannot make speeches, Emma,' he soon resumed, and in a tone of such sincere, decided, intelligible

tenderness as was tolerably convincing. 'If I loved you less, I might be able to talk about it more. But you know what I am ; you hear nothing but truth from me. I have blamed you, and lectured you, and you have borne it as no other woman in England would have borne it. Bear with the truths I would tell you now, dearest Emma, as well as you have borne with them. The manner, perhaps, may have as little to recommend them. God knows I have been a very indifferent lover. But you understand me. Yes, you see—you understand my feelings, and will return them if you can. At present I ask only to hear, once to hear your voice.'"

Emma's mind is busy. Harriet's hopes have been groundless—a delusion as complete as any of her own—and Emma rejoices that Harriet's secret has not escaped her. "It was all the service she could now render her poor friend ; for as to any of that heroism of sentiment which might have prompted her to entreat him to transfer his affection from herself to Harriet, as infinitely the more worthy of the two—or even the more simple sublimity of resolving to refuse him at once and for ever, without vouchsafing any motive, because he could not marry them both, Emma had it not." "She spoke then on being entreated. What did she say? Just what she ought, of course. A lady always does. She said enough to show there need not be despair, and to invite him to say more himself."

"Mr. Knightley had, in fact, been wholly unsuspecting of his own influence. He had come to see how she bore Frank Churchill's engagement with no selfish view, the rest had been the work of a moment.

"*Her* change was equal. This one half-hour had given to each the same precious certainty of being beloved, had cleared from each the same degree of ignorance, jealousy, or distrust. On his side there had been a long-standing jealousy, old as the arrival, or even the expectation, of Frank Churchill. He had been in love with Emma and jealous of Frank Churchill from about the same period, one sentiment having probably

enlightened him as to the other. It was his jealousy of Frank Churchill that had taken him from the country. The Box Hill party had decided him on going away. He would save himself from witnessing again such permitted, encouraged attentions. He had gone to learn to be indifferent, but he had gone to a wrong place. There was too much domestic happiness in his brother's house ; woman wore too amiable a form in it. Isabella was too much like Emma, differing only in those striking inferiorities which always brought the other in brilliancy before him, for much to have been done, even had his time been longer. He had stayed on, however, vigorously, day after day, till this very morning's post had conveyed the history of Jane Fairfax. Then, with the gladness which must be felt, nay, which he did not scruple to feel, having never believed Frank Churchill to be at all deserving Emma, was there so much fond solicitude, so much keen anxiety for her, that he could stay no longer. He had ridden home through the rain, and had walked up directly after dinner to see how this sweetest and best of all creatures, faultless in spite of all her faults, bore the discovery.

“ He had found her agitated and low. Frank Churchill was a villain. He heard her declare that she had never loved him. Frank Churchill's character was not desperate. She was his own Emma, by hand and word, when they returned into the house ; and if he could have thought of Frank Churchill then, he might have deemed him a very good sort of fellow.” The concluding paragraph, in its mingled vivacity and satire, is peculiarly Jane Austen's.

Emma had left the house for a little respite from suffering. She returns to it in an exquisite flutter of happiness. The reflections of a sleepless night tranquillise Emma's feelings. Her gravest considerations are her father and Harriet, since Emma's happiness by no means absolves her, in her own opinion, in that of her author, or in reality, from caring for others. She hardly knows yet what Mr. Knightley will ask ; but a

very short parley with her own heart produces the most solemn resolution of never quitting her father. She even weeps at the idea of it, as a sin of thought. While he lives it must be only an engagement, which, she flatters herself, might become an additional comfort to him.

With regard to poor Harriet, Emma must still experience much bitter self-reproach and many sorrowful regrets. The best that Emma can devise for her friend, while still avoiding a meeting, and communicating what she has to tell by letter, is to procure for Harriet an invitation to visit Isabella. A few weeks spent in London will furnish some amusement.

Emma's letter to Harriet, written the first thing before breakfast, is so hard a task that Mr. Knightley, in walking over to breakfast, does not come too soon. He has not left her long when a thick packet from Mrs. Weston encloses Frank Churchill's promised explanation.

It is a good letter—appealing not unsuccessfully to the candour and indulgence of his reader. The writer dwells eloquently on all the difficulties which beset his devoted attachment to Miss Fairfax, so that if he had not persuaded her to stoop to a secret engagement, he must have gone mad. He confesses ingenuously what had really been the motive of his first visit to Highbury.

He admits that his attentions to Miss Woodhouse were partly for the purpose of assisting in the concealment of his real object. But he insists that, if he had not been convinced of her indifference, he would not have acted as he did. They seemed to understand each other. When he called to take leave of her, he had been on the verge of confessing the truth. He believes she had some suspicion of it. He remembers her telling him at the ball that he ought to be grateful to Mrs. Elton. His heart was in Highbury, and his business was to get his body there as often as might be, and with the least suspicion.

Of the piano so much talked of, he need not say that it was ordered entirely without the knowledge of Miss

Fairfax, who would never have allowed him to send it had any choice been given her. Afterwards he had behaved shamefully. Does Mrs. Weston remember the morning at Donwell? He was late. He met Miss Fairfax walking home by herself, and wanted to walk with her; but she would not suffer it. He had thought her over-cautious, even cold. He now saw she was perfectly right. "While I, to blind the world to our engagement, was behaving one hour with objectionable particularity to another woman, was she to be consenting the next to a proposal which might have made every previous precaution useless? Had we been met walking together between Donwell and Highbury, the truth must have been suspected. I was mad enough, however, to resent—I doubted her affection. I doubted it more the next day on Box Hill, when, provoked by such conduct on my side—such shameful, insolent neglect of her, and such apparent devotion to Miss W., as it would have been impossible for any woman of sense to endure—she spoke her resentment in a form of words perfectly intelligible to me."

Even then he was not such a fool as not to mean to be reconciled in time; but he went away, determined that she should make the first advances.

In the meantime she closed with the offer of a situation as governess; and wrote to him that, as she felt the engagement to be a source of repentance and misery to each, she dissolved it.

The letter reached him on the very morning of his aunt's death. He answered it within the hour, but in the confusion which followed, his answer, instead of being sent off with the many letters despatched that day, was locked up in his writing-desk, while he trusted that he had said enough, though in but a few lines, to satisfy her. He was surprised at getting no answer till he received a parcel—his own letters returned, with a note stating her surprise at not having heard from him in reply to her last letter, and begging him to forward her letters to Mrs. Smallridge's, near Bristol.

He knew the name, the place, and instantly saw what she had been about. What was to be done? One thing only. He must speak to his uncle; without his sanction Frank could not hope to be listened to again. And Mr. Churchill, softened by the late event, was earlier reconciled than Frank could have ventured to expect.

Is Mrs. Weston disposed to pity Frank for having to plead his cause with so much at stake? She must not pity him till he reached Highbury, and saw how ill he had made *her*. He knew when to find her alone. A great deal of very reasonable—very just—displeasure he had to persuade away. But it was done; they were reconciled—dearer, much dearer, than ever.

The letter makes its way to Emma's heart. Frank had been wrong, but he has suffered, and is very sorry; and he is so grateful to Mrs. Weston, and so much in love with Miss Fairfax, and Emma is so happy herself, that there is no being severe. Could he have entered the room, she must have shaken hands as heartily as ever.

Emma knows Mrs. Weston will like Mr. Knightley to see the letter; and she herself is anxious that he should read it when he comes again. He wishes to take it home with him; but when he has to look over it then and there, he goes through it, supplying a running commentary of caustic, humorous remarks: "Playing a dangerous game," he observes at one place; and when he comes to the piano, exclaims, "Ah! that was the act of a very young man—too young to consider whether the inconvenience of it might not very much exceed the pleasure." "I perfectly agree with you, sir," Mr. Knightley echoes, "you did behave very shamefully." "What a letter the man writes!" protests the lover, impatient on his own account.

"I wish you would read it with a kinder spirit towards him," interposes Emma.

"Well, there is feeling here," admits Knightley. "He does seem to have suffered in finding her ill. He has had great faults—faults of inconsideration and

thoughtlessness; and I am very much of his opinion in thinking him likely to be happier than he deserves; but still, as he is, beyond doubt, really attached to Miss Fairfax, and will soon, it may be hoped, have the advantage of being constantly with her, I am very ready to believe his character will be improved, and acquire from hers the steadiness and delicacy of principle it wants."

But Mr. Knightley has something else to talk of. "And it is in plain, unaffected, gentlemanlike English, such as Mr. Knightley used even to the woman he was in love with" that he introduces his subject, "how to be able to ask her to marry him, without attacking the happiness of her father."

Emma's answer is ready. She can never quit her father.

Mr. Knightley, unselfish in everything, feels this as strongly as herself. But his mind has been at work all the morning to overcome the obstacle. He had first hoped to induce Mr. Woodhouse to remove with her to Donwell; but Mr. Knightley's knowledge of his future father-in-law's habits soon convinced him that this step was impossible. Mr. Woodhouse taken from Hartfield! it ought not to be attempted. But Mr. Knightley's next plan "he trusted his dearest Emma would not find in any respect objectionable: it was, that he should be received at Hartfield! that so long as her father's happiness—in other words, his life—required Hartfield to continue her home, it should be his likewise."

The last solution of the difficulty has never occurred to Emma. "She was sensible of all the affection it evinced. She felt that in quitting Donwell he must be sacrificing a great deal of independence of hours and habits; that in living constantly with her father, and in no house of his own, there would be much—very much—to be borne with.* She promised to think of it, and advised him to think of it more; but he was

* Mr. Knightley's quiet superiority to public opinion in making such a suggestion, is another fine point in a fine character.

fully convinced that no reflection could alter his wishes or his opinion on the subject. He had given it, he could assure her, very long and calm consideration. He had been walking away from William Larkins the whole morning, to have his thoughts to himself."

"Ah! there is one difficulty unprovided for," cried Emma. "I am sure William Larkins will not like it. You must get his consent before you ask mine."

"She promised, however, to think of it; and pretty nearly promised, moreover, to think of it with the intention of finding it a very good scheme."

"It is remarkable that Emma, in the many, very many, points of view in which she was now beginning to consider Donwell Abbey, was never struck with any sense of injury to her nephew Henry, whose rights as heir-expectant had formerly been so tenaciously regarded."

Emma would be too happy but for poor Harriet. "In time, of course, Mr. Knightley would be forgotten, that is, supplanted; but this could not be expected to happen very early. Mr. Knightley himself would be doing nothing to assist the cure; not like Mr. Elton. Mr. Knightley, always so kind, so feeling, so truly considerate for everybody, would never deserve to be less worshipped than now; and it really was too much to hope, even of Harriet, that she could be in love with more than three men in one year."

Mrs. Weston's friends are made happy by the birth of a daughter to her. Emma and Mr. Knightley compare notes on Miss Weston's education. He declares he is losing his bitterness against spoiled children; they are disagreeable in infancy, but correct themselves as they grow older.

Emma reminds him she had the advantage of his endeavours to qualify the indulgence of other people. It would be the greatest humanity if he would do as much for poor little Anna Weston, except fall in love with her when she is thirteen.

"How often when you were a girl," he tells her,

“have you said to me with one of your saucy looks, ‘ Mr. Knightley, I am going to do so and so ; papa says I may,’ or ‘ I have Miss Taylor’s leave ;’ something which you knew I did not approve. In such cases my interference was giving two bad feelings instead of one.”

“ ‘ What an amiable creature I was ! No wonder you should hold my speeches in such affectionate remembrance.’ ”

“ ‘ Mr. Knightley, you always called me. Mr. Knightley, and from habit it has not so very formal a sound. And yet it is formal. I want you to call me something else, but I do not know what.’ ”

“ ‘ I remember once calling you George in one of my amiable fits, about ten years ago. I did it because I thought it would offend you ; but, as you made no objection, I never did it again.’ ”

“ ‘ And cannot you call me George now ? ’ ”

“ ‘ Impossible ! I never can call you anything but Mr. Knightley. I will not promise even to equal the elegant terseness of Mrs. Elton by calling you Mr. K. But I will promise,’ she added presently, laughing and blushing, ‘ I will promise to call you once by your Christian name. I do not say when, but perhaps you may guess where : in the building in which N. takes M. for better, for worse.’ ”

Harriet had answered Emma’s letter, breaking to her the true state of affairs, much as might have been supposed, without reproaches, or apparent sense of ill-usage ; and yet Emma fancied there was a something of resentment, a something bordering on it in her style, which increased the desirableness of their being separate. It might be only her own consciousness, but it seemed as if an angel only could have been quite without resentment under such a stroke.

But an invitation from Isabella is procured, Harriet finds the excuse of wishing to see a dentist, and Emma has the comfort of getting Harriet conveyed in state, in Mr. Woodhouse’s carriage, to Brunswick Square, and established there for a fortnight.

John Knightley replies to his brother's announcement of his intended marriage, with brotherly congratulations, in which Emma declares he writes like a sensible man. It is very plain he considers the good fortune of the engagement as all on her side, but that he is not without hope of her growing, in time, worthy of Mr. Knightley's affection.

Mr. Knightley remonstrates like a lover on this inference. He means no such thing; he only means——

“Oh!” she cries, “if you fancy your brother does not do me justice, only wait till my dear father is in the secret, and hear his opinion. Depend upon it, he will be much farther from doing *you* justice. He will think all the happiness, all the advantage, on your side of the question—all the merit on mine. I wish I may not sink into ‘poor Emma’ with him at once. His tender compassion towards oppressed worth can go no farther.”

The communication of the couple's purpose is made in the gentlest manner to Mr. Woodhouse. The information gives the poor gentleman a considerable shock. He tries earnestly to dissuade Emma from her intention. “She was reminded more than once of her having always said she would never marry, and assured that it would be a great deal better for her to remain single, and told of poor Isabella and poor Miss Taylor. But it would not do. Emma hung about him affectionately and smiled, and said it must be so, and that he must not class her with Isabella and Mrs. Weston, whose marriages, taking them from Hartfield, had, indeed, made a melancholy change. But she was not going from Hartfield. She was introducing no change in their numbers or their comforts but for the better. Did not he love Mr. Knightley very much? Would not he like to have him always on the spot?”

“Yes, that was all very true; Mr. Knightley could not be there too often; he should be glad to see him every day; but they did see him every day as it was. Why could not they go on as they had done?”

Mr. Woodhouse cannot soon be reconciled, but at least the matter is broken to him.

Contrast the tender, protecting reverence of the gay and witty Emma Woodhouse to her father's weakness, with the flippant, bold, offensive disrespect displayed by so many of the silly, ill-bred, unprincipled heroines of modern novels to their despised and insulted fathers.

The proposed marriage has the warmest support from the rest of Emma's friends—above all, from Isabella and Mrs. Weston. Mrs. Weston, with her baby on her knee, indulging in reflections on the perfection of the match in every respect, "was one of the happiest women in the world. If anything could increase her delight, it was perceiving that the baby would soon have outgrown its first set of caps."*

Mr. Weston walks into Highbury the morning after he has heard the good news, to ascertain if "Jane" had any suspicion of it, and before night it is all over the place. It is, generally speaking, a well-approved match, though Mr. Elton can do no more than hope the young lady's pride will now be contented, and suppose she has always meant to "catch Knightley;" and Mrs. Elton is forced to cry, "Rather he than I! Poor Knightley!" There will be an end to their pleasant intercourse. No more exploring parties to Donwell made for her. Shocking plan, living together! She knew a family near Maple Grove who had tried it, and been obliged to separate before the end of the first quarter.

I must beg Mrs. Elton's pardon for differing from her, in remarking how far Jane Austen—with her hero and heroine—was above selfish insular prejudices, in contemplating the humane, kindly arrangement which did not fear to unite, in one household, kindred, old and young, of different generations.

Harriet's visit to London has been protracted to a

* Babies' tiny caps have disappeared, like some other articles of costume in Emma's day. What would Mrs. Weston have thought of the bald little polls which are now fearlessly exposed by mothers and nurses?

month's duration, and Emma is rather anxiously anticipating her friend's return in company with John Knightley and his wife, when Mr. Knightley walks in one morning, to tell her some news which he will not undertake to define as either good or bad.

She cries, it is good, for she sees him trying not to smile.

"I am afraid," he said, composing his features, "I am very much afraid, my dear Emma, that you will not smile when you hear it." He goes on to observe there is one subject on which they differ—does she not recollect it—Harriet Smith?

Emma's cheeks flush, and she feels afraid for what is coming.

"You are prepared for the worst, I see, and very bad it is. Harriet Smith marries Robert Martin."

Emma gives a violent start.

It is so, indeed. Mr. Knightley has had it from Robert Martin himself. He left him not half an hour before.

Still Emma sits, the picture of amazement.

Mr. Knightley prepares to try to reconcile her to the fact.

She interrupts him. It is not that such a circumstance can now make her unhappy; but she cannot believe it. He must only mean that Robert Martin intends to propose to Harriet!

"I mean that he has done it, and been accepted."

"Well!" exclaims Emma; and, oh! the significance of the interjection!—she has to bend her face over her work-basket, to conceal her expression of delight and entertainment, while she begs for particulars.

"It is a very simple story. He went to town on business three days ago, and I got him to take charge of some papers which I was wanting to send to John. He delivered these papers to John at his chambers, and was asked by him to join their party the same evening to Astley's. They were going to take the two eldest boys to Astley's. The party was to be our brother and

sister, Henry, John,—and Miss Smith. My friend Robert could not resist. They called for him in their way; were all extremely amused; and my brother asked him to dine with them next day, which he did; and in the course of that visit, as I understand, he found an opportunity of speaking to Harriet, and certainly did not speak in vain. She made him, by her acceptance, as happy even as he is deserving. He came down by yesterday's coach, and was with me this morning, immediately after breakfast, to report his proceedings, first on my affairs, and then on his own. That is all I can relate of the how, where, and when. Your friend Harriet will make a much longer history when you see her. She will give you all the minute particulars, which only woman's language can make interesting. In our communications we deal only in the great. However, I must say that Robert Martin's heart seemed for *him* and to *me* very overflowing; and that he did mention, without its being much to the purpose, that on quitting their box at Astley's, my brother took charge of Mrs. John Knightley and little John, and he followed with Miss Smith and Henry; and that at one time they were in such a crowd, as to make Miss Smith rather uneasy."

Emma dares hardly speak, lest she should betray her unreasonable happiness; but she ventures to say she has learnt to think Harriet is doing extremely well; only the affair is so sudden, for she received reason lately to believe Harriet Smith more determined against Mr. Martin than ever.

"You ought to know your friend best," replies Mr. Knightley; "but I should say she was a good-tempered, soft-hearted girl, not likely to be very, very determined against any young man who told her he loved her."

Emma cannot help laughing. "Upon my word, I believe you know her quite as well as I do."

He says he has taken some pains, as Emma must have seen, both for her sake and Robert Martin's

sake—he had reason to believe him as much in love with Harriet as ever—to get better acquainted with Harriet; and he has come to the satisfactory conclusion that she is an artless, amiable girl, with “very good notions, very seriously good principles, placing her happiness in the affections and utility of domestic life.”

No doubt, simple young Harriet Smiths, who are like wax in the hands of their friends, have not died out in the land; but the great thing for them, as for the wisest of their sex, is that they should possess integrity, a high sense of duty, that “good and honest heart,” which brings forth fruit a hundredfold. Having this greatest grace, they can dispense even with the intellectual gifts which have been denied them.

Emma is very serious and humble in her thankfulness; “yet there was no preventing a laugh sometimes. She must laugh at such a close—such an end of the doleful disappointment of five weeks back—such a heart—such a Harriet!”

“Now there would be a pleasure in her returning; everything would be a pleasure; it would be a great pleasure to know Robert Martin.”

High among Emma’s pleasures is the consciousness that there will soon be no farther need for concealment in any of her relations. Her rejoicing at the prospect of a speedy escape from “disguise, equivocation, mystery—so hateful to her in practice”—ought to be written in letters of gold for an age of sorry romance, which is no true romance, since its foundations are so often laid in deception and double-dealing.

There is a charming conclusion to the second last chapter of “Emma,” in which many of the actors in the story meet accidentally at Randalls. There Emma first sees Frank Churchill after the explanations which have occurred, and after the announcement of their respective marriages. When a few moments of awkwardness have been surmounted, he thanks her for her message of forgiveness; and after they have renewed their friendly alliance on a more secure foundation, his spirits soon

rise to their old high level. "Was she not looking well?" he said, confident of Emma's sympathy, as he turned his eyes towards Jane; "better than she used to do?"

He is soon ready to fix laughing eyes on his companion, as he mentions the return of the Campbells, and names the name of Dixon.

Emma blushes, and forbids its being pronounced in her hearing.

"I can never think of it," she cries, "without extreme shame."

"The shame," he answers, "is all mine—or ought to be"—a wise reservation. Then he asks if it is possible she never had any suspicion, and mentions how near he had once been to telling her everything. He demands Emma's pity for his being compelled to remain at such a distance from Miss Fairfax, as not to have seen her once before since their reconciliation. Then with a gay, "Oh, by-the-bye," he hopes Mr. Knightley is well, and returns her congratulations with interest. "He is a man," said Frank Churchill, "whom I cannot presume to praise."

Emma is delighted, and wants him to go on in the same style.

No, he is off the next moment to his own concerns and his own Jane. Did Emma ever see such a skin, such smoothness, such delicacy, a most distinguishing complexion, just colour enough for beauty?

"'I have always admired her complexion,' replied Emma, archly; 'but do not I remember the time when you found fault with her for being so pale?—when we first began to talk of her—have you quite forgotten?'

"'Oh, no. What an impudent dog I was; how could I dare——'

"But he laughed so heartily at the recollection, that Emma could not help saying, 'I do suspect that in the midst of your perplexities at that time, you had very great amusement in tricking us all. I am sure you had. I am sure it was a consolation to you.'

“ ‘Oh, no, no, no ! How can you suspect me of such a thing ? I was the most miserable wretch.’

“ ‘Not quite so miserable as to be insensible to mirth. I am sure it was a source of high entertainment to you, to feel that you were taking us all in. Perhaps I am the readier to suspect, because, to tell you the truth, I think it might have been some amusement to myself in the same situation. I think there is a little likeness between us.’

“ He bowed.

“ ‘If not in our dispositions,’ she presently added, with a look of true sensibility, “there is a likeness in our destiny—the destiny which bids fair to connect us with two characters so much superior to our own.’

“ ‘True, true,’ he answered warmly. ‘No, not true on your side. You can have no superior. But most true on mine. She is a complete angel. Look at her ! Is not she an angel in every gesture ? Observe the turn of her throat. Observe her eyes, as she is looking up at my father. You will be glad to hear’ (inclining his head, and whispering seriously) ‘that my uncle means to give her all my aunt’s jewels. They are to be new set. I am resolved to have some in an ornament for the head. Will it not be beautiful in her dark hair ?’*’

“ ‘Very beautiful indeed,’ replied Emma ; and she spoke so kindly that he gratefully burst out, ‘How delighted I am to see you again ! and to see you in such excellent looks ! I would not have missed this meeting for the world. I should certainly have called at Hartfield, had you failed to come.’

Mrs. Weston is talking of some little alarm she had felt about the child, when she was within half a minute of sending for Mr. Perry.

“ Frank Churchill caught the name. ‘Perry !’ said he to Emma, and trying as he spoke to catch Miss

* “ They’ve robbed that maid so poor and pale
In silks and samites rare ;
And pearls for drops of frozen hail
Are glistening in her hair.”

Fairfax's eye, 'My friend, Mr. Perry. What are they saying about Mr. Perry? Has he been here this morning? and how does he travel now? Has he set up his carriage?'

"Emma soon recollected and understood him; and while she joined in the laugh, it was evident from Jane's countenance that she too was really hearing him, though trying to seem deaf.

"Such an extraordinary dream of mine!' he cried. 'I can never think of it without laughing. She hears us; she hears us, Miss Woodhouse. I see it in her cheek, her smile, her vain attempt to frown. Look at her! Do not you see that, at this instant, the very passage of her own letter, which sent me the report, is passing under her eye; that the whole blunder is spread before her; that she can attend to nothing else, though pretending to listen to the others?'

"Jane was forced to smile completely, for a moment; and the smile partly remained as she turned towards him, and said in a conscious, low, yet steady voice—'How you can bear such recollections is astonishing to me! They will sometimes obtrude; but how can you *court* them?'"

Jane Austen is not in favour of blindness in love. In the room of doting adoration, she makes her men and women feel the nobler, more rational, and infinitely more lasting love which sees all the faults of the person beloved, yet loves on fondly and faithfully, doing love's best work in helping to remedy the imperfections. George Knightley is capable—not merely of finding fault with Emma, but of sharply reproving her, in his true and tender regard for her. Nay, we suspect there is something which may find even less approval from some critics, in Elizabeth Bennet and Jane Fairfax, at the summit of their happiness, remaining still clear-sighted and impartial enough to perceive the weak points, in characters so different as those of the two heroes, Darcy and Frank Churchill, and to set themselves to remove the flaws, even as the women themselves

desire to be taught to recognise and amend their own foibles.

What worthy, enduring, consecrated love it is which stands such wholesome tests!

Neither is Miss Austen greatly on the side of love at first sight. She is a little distrustful of first impressions, and rather prefers—as the wiser and safer course—to give her girls to old and tried friends, who have developed into faithful lovers.

It is Harriet's turn to look a little foolish when she and Emma meet; but having once owned that she had been presumptuous, silly, and self-deceived, her pain and confusion seem to die away, and leave her without a care for the past, and with the fullest exultation in the present and future—Emma's unqualified congratulations removing every fear on the score of Harriet's friend. Harriet is most happy to give every detail of the evening at Astley's, and the dinner next day.

The fact is, she had always liked Robert Martin, and his continuing to love her has proved, under the circumstances, irresistible.

Emma becomes acquainted with Robert Martin, who is introduced at Hartfield. She feels perfectly satisfied with regard to the future respectability and happiness of her friend. At the same time Harriet's engagements with the Martins, which draw her more and more from Hartfield, are not to be regretted. Jane Austen, with her uncompromising good sense, adds—"The intimacy between her and Emma must sink; their friendship must change into a calmer sort of good-will; and fortunately what ought to be, and must be, seemed already beginning, and in the most gradual, natural manner."

But Emma does not fail to attend Harriet to church, in the end of that September, and see her hand bestowed on Robert Martin, with the blessing pronounced by Mr. Elton; while Emma has not a thought to spare for the identity of the officiating clergyman, beyond being engrossed by the reflection that it will probably be the

same man who will do a like office for her and Mr. Knightley in the coming month of October.

Jane Fairfax has already quitted Highbury. She is restored to the comforts and refinements of her beloved home with the Campbells. The two Mr. Churchills—uncle and nephew—are also in town, and they are only waiting for the expiration of their first three months' mourning, to celebrate the event which will remove Jane to preside over the dignified establishment at Enscombe.

After all, Emma and Mr. Knightley owe to a comical accident the power to go on with their share of the triple marriages at the time appointed, without distressing Mr. Woodhouse too much, as Emma recoiled from doing—though she perfectly believed the assurances of both the Mr. Knightleys, that when the catastrophe was over, the distress would soon be over too.

During the period of suspense, by an ill wind which blows somebody good, Mrs. Weston's poultry-house is robbed of all her turkeys—evidently by the ingenuity of man. "Other poultry yards in the neighbourhood also suffered. Pilfering was *house-breaking* to Mr. Woodhouse's fears. He was very uneasy; and but for the sense of his son-in-law's protection, would have been under wretched alarm every night of his life. The strength, resolution, and presence of mind of the Mr. Knightleys, commanded his fullest dependence. While either of them protected him and his, Hartfield was safe. But Mr. John Knightley must be in London again, by the end of the first week in November."

The result is, that with a much more cheerful and voluntary consent than she had ever ventured to hope for from her father, his daughter is able to fix the marriage day.

"The wedding was very much like other weddings, where the parties have no taste for finery and parade; and Mrs. Elton, from the particulars detailed by her husband, thought it all extremely shabby and very inferior to her own. 'Very little white satin; very few lace veils; a most pitiful business! Selina would stare

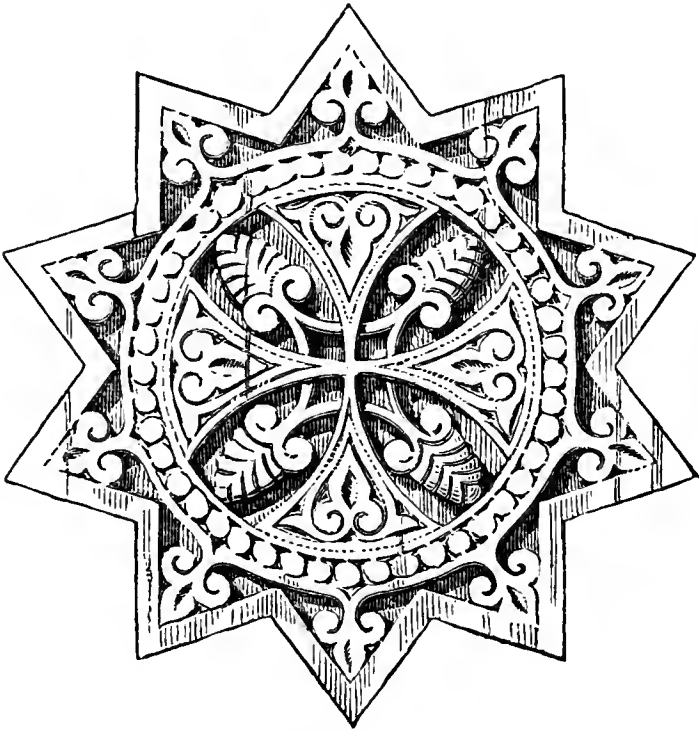
when she heard of it.' But in spite of these deficiencies, the wishes, the hopes, the confidence, the predictions of the small band of true friends who witnessed the ceremony were fully answered in the perfect happiness of the union."

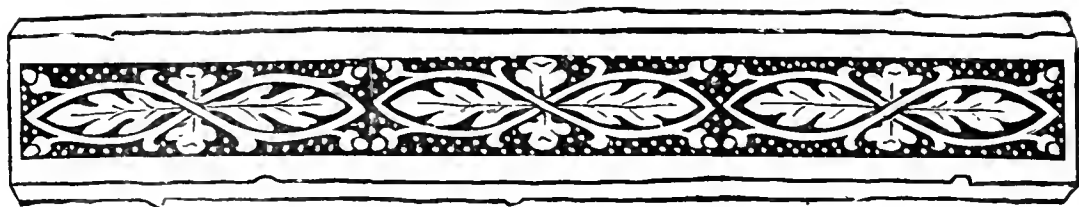
In some respects "Emma" stands first among Jane Austen's novels. In construction it is as nearly as possible perfect. The unparalleled art which, from characters and incidents even simpler and more ordinary than usual, builds up a tale which never for a moment loses its charm and interest, which is made to "grow," as in real life—the one motive and the one action springing out of the other—the characters developing and ripening in exact proportion, is carried to such a height that critics have been justified in saying—and how rarely is such an assertion warranted in fiction?—that there is not a single chapter which could have been withdrawn without serious injury to the skilfully interwoven threads of the story. For that matter, critics might have gone a good deal further, and asserted that not a scene or a conversation, hardly a paragraph, could have been abstracted or shortened, without marring in a measure the succession of clearly discriminating, exquisitely delicate touches by which the author has done her work.

It is this artistic completeness which makes it so difficult—in a sense so ungracious a task, to condense Jane Austen's pages, or tamper with them, however carefully and scrupulously. When one thinks by contrast of the disgracefully slovenly—not to say weak and foolish—performances which are often allowed to pass muster as story-telling, it is with mortification and misery for many of the professors of the "craft."

Besides the incomparable finish which belongs to the author's later novels, we have a nearly unique power of reading nice varieties of character in "Emma:" whether we turn to the plaintive, cautious Mr. Woodhouse; to John Knightley in his trenchant speeches; to Miss Bates in her pitter-patter of innocent gossip, to Emma in her rash blindness; to Harriet in her sweet

silliness; to Frank Churchill, in his boyish enjoyment of stolen waters and bread eaten in secret, and the general mystification of his friends and acquaintances, no less than in his wilful, yet lovable and loyal passion for Jane Fairfax; to Mrs. Elton in her vain airs and clamorous self-assertion; to Mr. Knightley in his unpretending, kindly manliness.





“SENSE AND SENSIBILITY,” AND “MANSFIELD PARK.”



OF the two novels for which I have not found space here, the one belongs to the first, and the other to the second series of Jane Austen's tales.

“Sense and Sensibility” in its original form was, with the exception perhaps of “Lady Susan,” the first written of the author's stories which have come down to us. It has always seemed to me inferior to the novels which follow it, though its writer not only re-wrote it in her youth, but prepared it again for the press in her mature years, and brought it out before “Pride and Prejudice.” The astonishing precedence thus given might, however, have been accidental, or it might have been the result of the publisher's choice. It might also have been an instance of Jane Austen's confidence in her own powers and steadfastness of purpose. Certainly she appears to have valued “Sense and Sensibility” as highly as her other novels: an example of the proverbial blindness of authors to the proportion of merit in their own writings.

To say that “Sense and Sensibility” is inferior to its companions is by no means to suggest that it is without excellence. It has many of the attractions of Miss Austen's work. It is bright, clever, interesting and exceedingly life-like. Here and there, as in the charac-

ters of Mr. and Mrs. John Dashwood, Mr. and Mrs. Palmer, and Mrs. Jennings there is a good deal of the author's critical acumen and dry humour, yet they hardly arrive at their subsequent perfection. Thus Mr. and Mrs. Palmer, who are a little like Mr. and Mrs. Bennet in their youth, lag behind that entertaining couple.

In accordance with the name,* the story turns upon the relative advantages and disadvantages of sense and sensibility, the verdict being given, as might have been expected from the author, in favour of sense.

Two sisters, Ellinor and Marianne Dashwood, equally good, but the one full of quiet self-control, the other of impetuous feeling, which she never seeks to restrain, rather priding herself on its indulgence, as a proof of the strength and depth of her opinions and affections, have an oddly similar fate, being both in turn disappointed in love, and in a manner jilted by their respective lovers—Edward Ferrars, the reserved, sober-minded, somewhat sad, young clergyman; and John Willoughby, a frank, fervent, reckless young fellow, the masculine type which matches with the style of girls like Marianne Dashwood.

The causes and ends of the two sisters' histories are quite different from each other. And the happy termination of Ellinor's trials is not made a consequence of her superior wisdom and moderation—a nice distinction, with its appreciation of the facts of life, and of the rewards and punishments which must be inward, not outward, certainly remarkable in a young author.

Edward Ferrars' unwitting injury to Ellinor proceeds from his too great susceptibility to her attractions, and his involuntary betrayal of his attachment when he is thrown much in her company, while all the time he is an unresisting victim to a foolish youthful engagement. The lady is a pert, underbred Lucy Steele, with an irrepressible sister Anne; both of them determined not to lose sight of a great match for Lucy.

* Jane Austen must have had a partiality for alliteration.

Willoughby, after a romantic introduction to Marianne, first compromises himself by paying the most marked attention to the girl; and then, to meet the views of the relative on whom he is dependent, consents to give her up with the most cruel abruptness and harshness, and to pay his addresses to an heiress who is, in every respect save her fortune, repugnant to him.

Ellinor, who is made painfully aware of her lover's entanglement by the cunning of Lucy Steele in selecting the very girl whom Edward Ferrars prefers for her confidante, behaves not merely with perfect honour, but bears the mortification and grief with such gentle dignity and patience, and such magnanimous consideration for the unhappiness of Edward and the rights of Lucy, as to rob her unhappiness of half its sting, and to escape all humiliating exposure to the speculation and pity of her friends and acquaintances.

Marianne—who, far from checking, has gloried in Willoughby's extravagant devotion, and has never dreamt of concealing her answering devotion, which she regards as his due—abandons herself in the same proportion to incredulity, anguish, and despair on his desertion, until her life nearly pays the forfeit, and she has rendered herself an object either of ridicule or compassion to her whole circle.

At last Edward Ferrars is released, without dishonour on his part, from his rash engagement to Lucy Steele, by that calculating young lady's having found a still better match in Edward's less worthy brother, who is, however, the favourite son of their rich, tyrannical mother. The jilted man is thus free to consult his heart, and lays his tithes and parsonage at the feet of Ellinor Dashwood, who, on her part, is not too intolerant to accept the offer.

Marianne is cured of her folly by the shock of the illness which brings her to the brink of the grave, and by such atonement as Willoughby can offer, in the violence of his self-accusation and misery, when he believes she is dying, really killed by his barbarity.

He takes a long night's journey to inquire for her, and makes a clean breast to Ellinor of the reality of his love for her sister, and his remorse for the ill usage which, in his cowardliness and selfishness, he has inflicted on her.

Marianne Dashwood is so effectually cured—there is much hope for the broken heart of eighteen—that she listens before long, with gratitude and sympathy, to the constant, tender suit of that Colonel Brandon whom she had formerly laughed at and scorned as a lover, because he had reached the advanced age of thirty-five, had to take precautions against rheumatism, and confessed to having, when a young man, suffered from an unfortunate attachment; while Marianne Dashwood has not believed hitherto in any love save first love.

The evil of the gushing sensibility or sentimentality which, during the last century, girls were understood to cherish till it disqualified them for sober duty and rational behaviour, against which their mentors—whether young, blooming, and arch, like Jane Austen when she wrote “Sense and Sensibility,” or old, wrinkled, and grave, like Dr. Gregory when he delivered his advice to his daughters—were constantly warning young women, has given place in many quarters in this nineteenth century to a rollicking pretence of no feeling, a fast assumption of hardness, heartlessness and utter carelessness. Of the two evils the last would be the worse, if we could believe in its being anything more than an unlovely mask, in which bad manners and bad taste are occasionally combined with morbid shyness and sensitiveness, which, rather than betray themselves, assume the guise of levity, worldly-mindedness, or stolid indifference.

But the old frantic manifestations of love, hatred, and anguish are still to be found in a coarse, crude enough fashion; and, strange to say, are welcomed when found by the very readers who reprobate the existence in their own breasts of a pin's prick of the piled-up agonies which they enjoy in print in not a few modern novels.

“Mansfield Park,” one of Jane Austen's later tales,

is also one of her best. The story is intended to show the wrong and suffering, the positive moral taint produced by an entirely worldly education—whether the worldliness has been confined to practice in opposition to principles, or whether the very principles have never been inculcated, or have been presented in such a distorted form as to lose all power for good.

The handsome, healthy, wealthy, well-born and well-bred sons and daughters of Sir Thomas Bertram, of Mansfield Park, have been fortunate in inheriting all the good things of this life; and not the least fortunate in possessing an honourable and upright father—though his social prejudices and his partiality to his own flesh and blood somewhat warp his judgment and dull his perceptions—and a mother who, though an indolent, self-indulgent woman, is utterly incapable of active unkindness or wrong-doing.

The counteracting, overbalancing loss against so much gain is, that the young Bertrams, with one exception, have never learnt the first rudiments of self-denial and self-restraint. Tom, Maria, and Julia Bertram, under a thin varnish of polish and liveliness, are thoroughly selfish, self-willed young people, not really happy amidst all their advantages and the popularity secured by them, and altogether unprepared for the temptations and vicissitudes of life. Only Edmund Bertram—who, as the younger son, brought up to fill the family living, may by comparison have borne the yoke in his youth—is manly, generous, and kind.

The Bertrams' great friends, Henry and Mary Crawford, who had been left as orphans to the care of an uncle and aunt—of whom the first was one of the worst specimens of the coarse and vicious naval officer* of the day, and the second had lived a cat-and-dog life with

* In "Mansfield Park" it would seem as if Jane Austen impartially afforded a glimpse in Admiral Crawford and Lieutenant Price—though, to be sure, the last was only a lieutenant of marines—of the dark side of the members of the naval profession, whose bright side she illustrated, *con amore*, in William Price and in the naval officers in "Persuasion."

her husband—have missed what ought to have been the firm foundation of the Bertrams' characters.

No sacred sense of duty, no fine perception of rectitude extending to word and thought, no unsullied purity of tone, had been, even in theory, instilled into the Crawfords by the couple who, with all their faults, had still loved and petted the boy and girl entrusted to them; and so had been in one sense armed with deadliest weapons to destroy the children's moral nature.

Henry and Mary Crawford have, according to a graphic old saying, hung as they grew, without training, unless in evil. They have been endowed with many fine natural gifts and qualities, in addition to the accessories of rank and wealth. With regard to the last, Henry has a good estate in Norfolk, and Mary possesses a fortune of twenty thousand pounds. In reference to the first, Mary is a lovely brunette, as well as a witty, merry, good-natured woman, who can play on the harp and sing in the long summer evenings to distraction—so far as young men are concerned. Henry, though not handsome, has a good figure and “a fine countenance,” by which old-fashioned phrase I understand a highly agreeable and intelligent expression of face. He is even wittier and more talented than his sister, frank, equal to any difficult occasion of social life, and capable of winning golden opinions in all; a special treasure in a dull country house; “a charming fellow”—in short, a very fascinating young man.

The two Crawfords present the fairest exterior on first acquaintance. They are cast in an altogether finer mould than Tom Bertram and his sisters, and are fitted for better things by a subtle touch of their author's art. It takes time and trial to discover that under the winning surface there is neither soundness nor steadfastness: the very core is corrupt.

In broad contrast to the Crawfords and the Bertrams—all save Edmund—are Fanny and William Price, the daughter and son of the poor, worthless Lieutenant of Marines. They have been called upon from their

earliest childhood to be helpful, contented with little, and self-forgotten. If Jane Austen dwelt somewhat strongly in "Emma" on the blessings of prosperity, in "Mansfield Park" she had already taught, and never with greater effect, how sweet were the uses of adversity.

Probably, of all the author's heroines, Fanny Price, if not the most charming, is the greatest triumph of genius, for one can hardly conceive two natures moulded by circumstances more unlike than the life of Jane Austen in her youth, and that of the timid, shrinking, sickly Fanny Price. She comes as a humble *protégée* to Mansfield Park, and has to endure all the well-meant but somewhat oppressive patronage of Sir Thomas, the perpetual fault-finding of her aunt Norris, and the alternate condescension and snubbing of her cousins—always excepting her champion, Edmund. But a little later on, even Edmund turns without knowing it against his little cousin, whom he has defended, encouraged, and been fond of ever since she came to Mansfield Park. For it is the worst heart-ache of all to Fanny to see the cousin Edmund whom she has looked up to, and loved all these years, about to throw himself away on Mary Crawford, whom Fanny knows, by sure instinct, to be unworthy of him. Edmund in his blindness insists on making his friend-pupil the confidante of his hopes and fears; nay, as if to add insult to injury, in his affectionate zeal for his young cousin's welfare, he presses on her to accept the suit of another man.

So completely did Jane Austen realise all the softness and sweetness, and yet the staunchness—all the fragrant, white-violet-like charm of Fanny Price—so well did the author describe the pangs of wounded love in the tenderest of hearts—the meek mortification of a gentle nature which bore no grudge against its enemies—the pensive joys, the tremulous apprehensions of the situation—that Archbishop Whately went near to asserting the conviction that only a woman who had been herself crossed in love could thus fully interpret her heroine.

Mrs. Norris—Fanny's terrible Aunt Norris, with her unslumbering activity, her restless meddling, her good deeds done by proxy in the parsimony which was stronger even than the love of rule, her doting indulgence to the young Bertrams, her carping snappishness to Fanny Price and her brother William—is an unsurpassed representation of a domineering, time-serving, radically harsh and mean nature, under all its pretensions and self-deceptions, as well as an inimitable piece of genteel comedy.

William Price—Fanny's frank, light-hearted young sailor brother—with his pride in his profession, and his fondness for his sister, is also very good.

I do not wish to tell in a few words how Fanny escaped the imminent peril of being won by Henry Crawford. Indeed the peril, in the author's fidelity to nature, is so imminent, in spite of Fanny's pre-engaged affections—granting that they were hopeless—and the reader is so enchanted with the flattered young prince's sudden keen appreciation of the neglected Cinderella, that he or she is tempted against reason, almost against conscience, to long that Henry Crawford's love may prevail over his levity, vanity, and lack of settled principles, and earn its reward, rendering him at once a better and a happier man.

But Jane Austen knew better, and the grievous sin and shame which separate for ever Henry Crawford and Fanny Price, is made to open Edmund Bertram's eyes to the moral gulf between his nature and that of Mary Crawford, which, no less than his sister's degradation, simply renders it impossible for him to marry Mary.

The obstacles between the couple, who have been fitted for each other from the first, thus doubly swept away, Jane Austen does not waste many words in bringing them together, and leaving them happy for ever afterwards.

The scenes during the private theatricals—when Sir Thomas is lending dignified encouragement to Mr.

Crawford's attentions to his niece, by giving a ball at Mansfield Park—when Fanny is sent to pay her visit to her home at Portsmouth, not so much to punish her for her obstinate refusal of her gallant, undaunted lover, as to teach her when she is well off, and how she ought to prize the good fortune within her reach—are among the best Jane Austen has painted.

Jane Austen had something of a parental affection for her books. She wrote to a friend, whose little daughter had been lately born, "I trust you will be as glad to see my 'Emma' as I shall be to see your Jemima." She did not dismiss from her mind the creatures of her fancy with the narrative in which they had figured. She seemed to like to follow them in imagination in the careers into which she had launched them. They were real men and women* to her. She would, when asked, supply further particulars of the history of some of these brain-children. Her friends learned in this way that Anne Steele found a husband in the doctor; that Kitty Bennet was satisfactorily married to a clergyman near Pemberley, while Mary obtained nothing higher than one of her Uncle Philip's clerks, and was content to be considered a star in Meryton; that the considerable sum given by Mrs. Norris to William Price was one pound; that the letters placed by Frank Churchill before Jane Fairfax, which she swept away unread, contained the one word "*pardon!*" and that Mr. Woodhouse survived his daughter's marriage, and kept her and Mr. Knightley from Donwell about two years.

* Children and animals are as much in the background in Jane Austen's novels as they were in the society of her day.



“PERSUASION.” *

I.



TEIGHTEEN Anne Elliot, a pretty, gentle, motherless girl, one of the three daughters of a poor and proud baronet, had met a gallant young naval officer; a Lieutenant Wentworth, who had paid ample homage to her attractions. The couple had fallen very genuinely and deeply in love. Their marriage was impossible till the gentleman should rise in his profession, or come home with prize-money. But Sir Walter Elliot, more from indifference than indulgence to Anne, would have permitted the engagement—entered into for a brief space of mingled happiness and misery—to continue. It was Lady Russell—Anne’s mother’s friend—who interfered, and by her urgent representations of the trials of a long engagement, and the sacrifice of the man’s prospects, still more than those of the woman, in a poor marriage, induced Anne to consent to the engagement being broken off.

The couple parted in mutual sorrow, strongly dashed by resentment on the gentleman’s side. They did not meet, they hardly heard of each other again, for eight years, during which the young officer followed his profession and won honours and fortune; while the girl he had loved lived on with her uncongenial relatives, and passed, with more than usual rapidity, from blooming,

* Written in 1816, and published after the Author’s death.

light-hearted girlhood to pale, serious womanhood.* In the interval certainly she might have married, with the approval of Lady Russell, who began to take alarm, and grow less exacting for her favourite. But Anne refused Charles Musgrove, younger, of Uppercross, who contented himself afterwards with her sister Mary. This event happened two years after the rupture with Lieutenant Wentworth, and six or seven years before the opening of the story. Since then, to Lady Russell's mortification, no desirable wooer had succeeded these earlier suitors.

In the course of the thirteen years during which Elizabeth Elliott, a handsome, cold-hearted woman, had presided over Kellynch and her father's house in London, opened county balls, and taken the lead at county dinner parties, Sir Walter, a foolish old coxcomb, had managed to get into embarrassed circumstances. The father and daughter had a capacity for spending, but none for retrenchment; so that when economy became absolutely necessary, the only feasible plan which presented itself was for Sir Walter to let Kellynch, and retire to Bath, where he could practise a certain amount of display with less outlay. Lady Russell, the great friend of the family, reluctantly advised this course.

The termination of the war is turning many naval officers ashore, and Kellynch is soon let to an Admiral Croft. On the first mention of him as a possible tenant Sir Walter asks superciliously, "And who is Admiral Croft?" and Anne joins in the conversation all at once, volunteering the minute information, "He is Rear-admiral of the White. He was on the Trafalgar station, and has been in the East Indies since. He has been stationed there, I believe, several years."

* If Jane Austen's high standing as an artist is granted, what becomes of the heathen saying that "Art has no moral?" Was she simply great in spite of her morals? Again, how shall we dispose of the scornful criticism, which treats the details of domestic life in a novel as twaddle? Jane Austen and twaddle are as far apart as Jane Austen and bombast.

When it is nearly settled that Admiral Croft is to come to Kellynch, Anne Elliott reflects sadly as she paces her favourite walk, "A few months more, and *he*, perhaps, may be walking here." "He" is not Admiral Croft, but his brother-in-law, Captain Wentworth.

When it is fixed that the Crofts are to come to Kellynch, and the Elliots are to go to Bath, it is also fixed that Anne is to pay visits to Lady Russell and to young Mrs. Musgrove, before she joins the rest of her family.

At Uppercross village there are the Great House, occupied by the squire and his wife, with their numerous younger children, prominent among whom are the two pleasant girls, Henrietta and Louisa Musgrove, and the Cottage where Charles Musgrove and his wife, Anne Elliott's sister, reside. Mrs. Charles, though selfish, and not over-wise, is less destitute of family affection than Elizabeth Elliot. Charles Musgrove is well-intentioned and friendly, with more brains than his wife, though the great object of his life is sport.

The Great House gaieties serve to enliven the family life at the Cottage, for the Musgroves are extremely popular, have a constant succession of neighbourly visitors, give many dinner-parties, and even an occasional unpremeditated little ball, because the girls are "wild for dancing."

Kellynch and Uppercross are near enough for visiting, and the Musgroves have to call for the Crofts. Anne is glad enough to be spared the visit, but she has no objection to be at home during the return visit.

Admiral Croft and his wife, who has been almost as much at sea as her husband—since these were the days when entire domestic establishments were permitted, to some extent, on board the ships in his Majesty's navy—show themselves frank, unaffected, and cordial, as become their antecedents. Anne would have heartily approved of Mrs. Croft, even though she had not been prepossessed in her favour, and specially interested in her, because of the opportunity of watching

for a likeness. The regard is extended to the bluff, good-humoured admiral. Just one or two awkward references are made. Mrs. Croft reminds Anne of her acquaintance with the elder lady's brother, but it turns out to be Edward Wentworth, the clergyman, and not Frederick, the sailor, to whom their sister refers. It may be, also, the same Edward of whom the admiral is thinking, when he remarks, "We are expecting a brother of Mrs. Croft's here soon," and is prevented from saying anything more.

But the next communication with one of the Misses Musgrove proves it was not Edward who was the coming brother. When the Crofts had called that morning, they had happened to say her brother, Captain Wentworth, just returned to England, or paid off, or something, was coming to see them almost directly; "and, most unluckily, it came into mamma's head, when they were gone, that Wentworth, or something like it, was the name of poor Richard's captain at one time; I do not know when, or where, but a great while before he died, poor fellow! And upon looking over his letters and things she found it was so, and is perfectly sure that this must be the very man; and her head is quite full of it, and of poor Richard." *

In a few days Captain Wentworth is at Kellynch. Mr. Musgrove has fulfilled his intention of calling for him, and it is by the merest chance that Anne and Mary, in one of their daily visits to the Great House, have not encountered Captain Wentworth paying his return visit.

The two sisters were stopped by a bad fall which one of the children had, in which his collar-bone was dislocated, and such alarming consequences apprehended for a time, that Anne was entirely engrossed by the claims upon her.

When the little boy is rather better, his young aunts who have come to inquire for him are at liberty to speak of some other person, and to try to express how per-

* A young Musgrove who had been in the navy, and died abroad.

fectly delighted they are with Captain Wentworth—how much handsomer, how infinitely more agreeable they think him than any individual among their male acquaintances who has been at all a favourite before; how glad they are that he has promised, in reply to their papa and mamma's pressing invitation, to dine with them to-morrow.

To begin with, neither Charles Musgrove nor his wife can think of leaving the child to join the dinner party. But after the boy has passed a good night, and the surgeon's report is favourable, they—first the father and then the mother—allow themselves to leave him, for a few hours, in the care of his aunt.

Charles Musgrove and his wife come home delighted with their new acquaintance. He is to shoot with Charles Musgrove next morning. There had been some mention of Captain Wentworth's coming to breakfast at the cottage, but he had been afraid of being in Mrs. Charles Musgrove's way on account of the child, and it had been agreed that Charles should meet him at the Great House instead.

Anne understands it. He wishes to avoid seeing her. He has inquired for her slightly, as might suit a former slight acquaintance, seeming to acknowledge such as she had acknowledged, probably with the same view of escaping an introduction when they do meet.

The morning hours of the Cottage were later than those at the other house. Mary and Anne are only beginning breakfast when Charles comes in for his dogs, and announces that his sisters are following with Captain Wentworth, who proposes to wait on Mrs. Charles Musgrove, for a few minutes, if convenient; and though Charles has answered for the state of the child, he would not be satisfied without Charles's running on to give notice.

Mary is full of gratification at the little attention, "while a thousand feelings rushed on Anne, of which this was the most consoling that it would soon be over. And it was soon over. In two minutes after Charles's preparation the others appeared; they were in the drawing-

room. Her eye half met Captain Wentworth's; a bow, a curtsy passed. She heard his voice; he talked to Mary, said all that was right, said something to the Misses Musgrove, enough to mark an easy footing; the room seemed full, full of persons and voices; but a few minutes ended it. Charles showed himself at the window. All was ready; their visitor had bowed and was gone, the Misses Musgrove were gone too, suddenly resolving to walk to the end of the village with the sportsmen; the room was cleared, and Anne might finish her breakfast as she could."

"It is over! it is over!" she repeated to herself again and again in nervous gratitude. "The worst is over!"

After the Misses Musgrove have finished their visit at the Cottage, Anne receives the spontaneous information from Mary, "Captain Wentworth is not very gallant by you, Anne, though he was so attentive to me. Henrietta asked him what he thought of you when they went away, and he said you were so altered he should not have known you again."

Mary had no feelings to make her respect her sister's in a common way, but she was perfectly unsuspecting of having inflicted any peculiar wound. She had been a girl at school during Anne's brief engagement, and had never been made acquainted with it.

"Altered beyond his knowledge! Anne fully submitted in silent, deep mortification. Doubtless it was so, and she could take no revenge, for he was not altered, or not for the worse, she had already acknowledged it to herself, and she could not think differently, let him think of her as he would. No; the years which had destroyed her youth and bloom had only given him a more glowing, manly, open look, in no respect lessening his personal advantages. She had seen the same Frederick Wentworth.

"Frederick Wentworth had used such words, or something like them, but without an idea that they would be carried round to her. He had thought her wretchedly

altered;* in the first moment of appeal had spoken as he felt. He had not forgiven Anne Elliot. She had used him ill, deserted and disappointed him; and worse, she had shown a feebleness of character in doing so, which his own decided, confident temper could not endure. She had given him up to oblige others. It had been the effects of over-persuasion. It had been weakness and timidity.

“He had been most warmly attached to her, and had never seen a woman since, whom he thought her equal; but, except from some natural sensation of curiosity, he had no desire of meeting her again. Her power with him was gone for ever.

“It was now his object to marry. He was rich, and being turned on shore, fully intended to settle as soon as he could be properly tempted; actually looking round, ready to fall in love with all the speed which a clear head and quick taste could allow. He had a heart for either of the Misses Musgrove if they could catch it; a heart, in short, for any pleasing young woman who came in his way, excepting Anne Elliot. This was his only secret exception.”

II.

From this time Captain Wentworth and Anne Elliot meet repeatedly in the same circle, and whatever may have become of former feelings, former times are

* Anne Elliot's pathetic position is unique, so far as I know, in the literature of Jane Austen's day. The contrast of her faded face and subdued spirit with Henrietta and Louisa Musgrove's fresh bloom and unchecked joyousness, would not be attempted in our day, with the same object in view, by an author who put a supreme value on material advantages, and extolled the attractions of youth beyond all other attractions. No such author—above all in a semi-cynical, semi-sensuous generation—could have anticipated, far less projected, the end of “Persuasion.”

inevitably alluded to in the conversation :—"That was in the year 'six," "That happened before I went to sea in the year 'six," he has occasion to say, the very first evening they spend together, and though his voice does not falter, while she has no reason to suppose his eyes wander towards her, she knows what must be in the minds of both.

"They had no conversation together, no intercourse but what the commonest civility required. Once so much to each other! now nothing! There had been a time when of all the large party now filling the drawing-room at Uppercross they would have found it most difficult to cease to speak to one another, with the exception, perhaps, of Admiral and Mrs. Croft, who seemed particularly attached and happy (Anne would allow no other exception, even among the married couples), there could have been no two hearts so open, no tastes so similar, no feelings so in unison, no countenances so beloved. Now they were as strangers—nay, worse than strangers, for they could never become acquainted. It was a perpetual estrangement."

He is in the foreground, the greatest and best talker present. Anne is in the background, silent, like

"One mute shadow, watching all."

The pretty, sweet young daughter of Sir Walter Elliot, whom Lieutenant Wentworth must have found a person of some consequence, however unassuming in her disposition, in the old society in which they mingled, appears now an individual of very little moment, though she is civilly treated, of course, even well liked, when he meets her again, in the character of an unmarried sister of Mrs. Charles Musgrove, at Uppercross.

Anne hears Captain Wentworth enlightening the ignorance of the Misses Musgrove as to the manner of living on board ship. "Their surprise at his accounts, at learning the degree of accommodation and arrangement which was practicable, drew from him some pleasant ridicule, which reminded Anne of the early days

when she, too, had been ignorant, and she, too, had been accused of supposing sailors to be living without anything to eat, or any cook to dress it if there were, or any servant to wait, or any knife and fork to use."

"It was a merry, joyous family party, and no one seemed in higher spirits than Captain Wentworth. She felt that he had everything to elevate him which general attention and deference, and especially the attention of all the young women, could do. The Misses Hayter (belonging to a family of cousins of the Musgroves) were apparently admitted to the honour of being in love with him; and as for Henrietta and Louisa, they both seemed so entirely occupied by him, that nothing but the continued appearance of the most perfect good-will between themselves could have made it credible that they were not decided rivals. If he were a little spoilt by such universal, such eager admiration, who could wonder?"

These are some of the thoughts which occupy Anne while her fingers are mechanically at work. *Once* she feels he is looking at her, perhaps trying to find some traces of the face which had formerly charmed him. "*Once* she knew that he must have spoken of her; she was hardly aware of it till she heard the answer, but then she was sure of his having asked his partner whether Miss Elliot never danced. The answer was 'Oh, no! never. She has quite given up dancing. She had rather play. She is never tired of playing.' *Once*, too, he spoke to her. She had left the instrument on the dancing being over, and he had sat down to try to make out an air which he wished to give the Misses Musgrove an idea of. Unintentionally she returned to that part of the room. He saw her, and instantly rising said, with studied politeness, 'I beg your pardon, madam, this is your seat;' and though she immediately drew back with a decided negative, he was not to be induced to sit down again."

"Anne did not wish for more of such looks and speeches. His cold politeness, his ceremonious grace, were worse than anything."

Captain Wentworth has come to Kellynch as to a home, to stay as long as he likes. It is soon Uppercross with him every day. There is one other person besides Anne whose peace is likely to be disturbed by this arrangement. Charles Hayter, the eldest of the humble cousins of the Musgroves, had received a college education and taken orders. As the heir of his father's small property, he is also more on an equality socially with the Musgroves than his brothers and sisters could hope to be. He is an agreeable, amiable young man, and there has been some appearance of an attachment between him and Henrietta Musgrove. "Her parents have not objected. It will not be a great match for Henrietta; but if Henrietta likes him—and Henrietta did like him till Captain Wentworth came, when cousin Charles has been very much forgotten."

It is at this stage of the proceedings that Charles Hayter returns from a fortnight's absence to find Captain Wentworth engrossing the attention of the Misses Musgrove, with their interest in their cousin's prospect of securing a particular curacy eclipsed by more exciting speculations. Even Henrietta has nothing better to spare than a hurried "Well, I am very glad indeed, but I always thought you would have it. In short, you knew Dr. Shirley must have a curate, and you had his promise. Is he coming, Louisa?"—to her sister, who is at a window, looking out for Captain Wentworth.

One morning Captain Wentworth walks into the drawing-room at the Cottage, when there are only Anne and the little invalid Charles, who is lying on the sofa.

"The surprise of finding himself almost alone with Anne Elliot deprived his manners of their usual composure. He started, and could only say, 'I thought the Misses Musgrove had been here; Mrs. Musgrove told me I should find them here,' before he walked to the window to recollect himself, and feel how he ought to behave."

"They are up stairs with my sister; they will be down in a few moments, I dare say," had been Anne's reply, in all the confusion that was natural, and if the

child had not called her to come and do something for him she would have been out of the room the next moment, and released Captain Wentworth as well as herself.

“He continued at the window; and after calmly and politely saying, ‘I hope the little boy is better,’ was silent.”

“She was obliged to kneel down by the sofa, and remain there to satisfy her patient; and thus they continued a few minutes, when, to her very great satisfaction, she heard some other person crossing the little vestibule. She hoped on turning her head to see the master of the house, but it proved to be one much less calculated for making matters easy—Charles Hayter—probably not at all better pleased by the sight of Captain Wentworth than Captain Wentworth had been by the sight of Anne.”

“She only attempted to say, ‘How do you do? Will you not sit down? The others will be here presently.’”

“Captain Wentworth, however, came from his window, apparently not ill-disposed for conversation; but Charles Hayter soon put an end to his attempts by seating himself near the table and taking up the newspaper, and Captain Wentworth returned to his window.”

“Another minute brought another addition. The younger boy, a remarkably stout, forward child of two years old, having got the door opened for him by some one without, made his determined appearance among them, and went straight to the sofa to see what was going on, and put in his claim to anything good that might be given away.

“There being nothing to eat, he could only have some play; and as his aunt would not let him tease his sick brother, he began to fasten himself upon her, as she knelt, in such a way that, busy as she was about Charles, she could not shake him off. She spoke to him, ordered, entreated, and insisted in vain. Once she did contrive to push him away, but the boy had the greater pleasure in getting upon her back again directly.

“ ‘Walter,’ said she, ‘get down this moment. You are extremely troublesome. I am very angry with you.’ ”

“ ‘Walter,’ cried Charles Hayter, ‘why do you not do as you are bid? Do not you hear your aunt speak? Come to me, Walter; come to cousin Charles.’ ”

“ But not a bit did Walter stir.

“ In another moment, however, she found herself in the state of being released from him; some one was taking him from her, though he had bent down her head so much, that his little sturdy arms were unfastened from around her neck, and he was resolutely borne away before she knew that Captain Wentworth had done it.”

She cannot even thank him, she can only hang over little Charles, while the conviction is forced upon her, from the noise which Captain Wentworth is studiously making with the other child, that her thanks and her conversation are the last of his wants, till the entrance of Mary and the Misses Musgrove enables her to leave the room.

Anne Elliot has soon been often enough in the company of Charles Hayter and Captain Wentworth, Henrietta and Louisa Musgrove, to warrant her in forming her own conclusions. Louisa may be rather the favourite with Captain Wentworth, but, as far as Anne dares to judge from memory and experience, he is not in love either with Louisa or Henrietta. “They were more in love with him; yet there, it was not love. It was a little fever of admiration; but it might, probably must, end in love with some. Charles Hayter seemed aware of being slighted, and yet Henrietta had sometimes the air of being divided between them.”

After a short struggle, Charles Hayter appears to quit the field. Three days have passed without his coming to Uppercross. He has even refused one regular invitation to dinner, and Mr. and Mrs. Musgrove chancing to see their nephew with some big books before him, talk with a grave face of his studying himself to death.

The sisters from the Great House call one day, when Charles Musgrove and Captain Wentworth have gone out shooting together, for the sisters at the Cottage as they are sitting quietly at work. It is a fine November day, and the Misses Musgrove have only come in, according to the inconvenient habit of the two families which makes it necessary to do everything in common, just as they are setting out for a long walk, in which they suppose Mary will not care to join them.

Mary, who generally gives herself out as half an invalid, resents the imputation on her walking powers, and declares she would like to accompany her sisters-in-law ; she is very fond of a long walk.

Anne sees the glances of annoyance which pass between the girls, and does her best to keep her sister at home. When she cannot prevail, as the next best thing she accepts the Misses Musgrove's invitation to go also, that she may be useful in turning back with her sister.

At the moment of starting the gentlemen return. They had taken out a young dog which had spoilt their sport. They are exactly ready for this walk.

After the walking party have gone some distance, Anne is tempted to say, "Is not this one of the ways to Winthrop?" (the Hayters' place), but nobody hears, or, at least, nobody answers her, till Winthrop, without beauty and without dignity, is stretched before them, an indifferent house, standing low, and hemmed in by the barns and buildings of a farmyard.

Mary exclaims, "Bless me! here is Winthrop, I declare; I had no idea!" then announces herself excessively tired, and proposes turning back. Henrietta, conscious and ashamed, seeing no cousin Charles walking along any path, or leaning against any gate, is ready to do as Mary wishes; but "No!" says Charles Musgrove, and "No, no!" cries Louisa, still more energetically, and taking her sister aside, seems to remonstrate with her warmly. Charles declares his intention of calling on his aunt when he is so near, and tries to induce his wife to go too. But the lady is unmanageable. The difficulty

is settled between the brother and sisters : Charles and Henrietta are to run down for a few moments to see their aunt and cousins, while the rest of the party wait for them at the top of the hill.

Mary, finding a comfortable seat for herself on the step of a stile, is very well satisfied so long as the others stand about her, but when Louisa draws Captain Wentworth away, to try for a gleanings of nuts in an adjoining hedgerow, and they go by degrees out of sight and sound, Mary is happy no longer. She is sure Louisa has got a better seat, and follows without finding her. Anne sees another nice seat for her sister, on a sunny bank under the hedgerow, but Mary quarrels with that also, and leaves Anne in possession. Anne is really tired, and sits on till she hears Captain Wentworth and Louisa in the hedgerow behind her, as if making their way back in the rough, wild sort of channel down the centre.

“Louisa’s first audible words showed that she was confiding to Captain Wentworth the secret of the walk, so far as it concerned herself and her sister, with a good deal more of the family history which explained the secret. “And so I made her go,” Anne heard Louisa say. “I could not bear that she should be frightened from the visit by such nonsense. What! would I be turned back from doing a thing I had determined to do, and that I knew to be right, by the airs and interference of such a person, or of any person, I may say?”

“She would have turned back then, but for you!”

“She would, indeed; I am almost ashamed to say it.”

“Happy for her to have such a mind as yours at hand,” exclaimed Captain Wentworth, hastily. “Woe betide him and her, too, when it comes to things of consequence, when they are placed in circumstances requiring fortitude and strength of mind, if she have not resolution enough to resist idle interference in such a trifle as this.” He dwells emphatically on the importance of firmness in all the relations of life, and winds up with the declaration: “My first wish for all

whom I am interested in, is that they should be firm. If Louisa Musgrove would be beautiful and happy in her November of life, she will cherish all her present powers of mind."

"He had done and was unanswered. It would have surprised Anne if Louisa could have readily answered such a speech; words of such interest, spoken with such serious warmth. She could imagine what Louisa was feeling. For herself, she feared to move lest she should be seen. While she remained a bush of low rambling holly protected her, and they were moving on. Before they were beyond her hearing, Louisa spoke again."

"Mary is good-natured enough in many respects," said she; "but she does sometimes provoke me excessively with her nonsense and her pride—the Elliot pride. She has a great deal too much of the Elliot pride. We do so wish that Charles had married Anne instead. I suppose you know he wanted to marry Anne?"

After a moment's pause, Captain Wentworth said, "Do you mean that she refused him?"

"Oh! yes, certainly."

"When did that happen?"

"I do not exactly know, for Henrietta and I were at school at the time; but I believe about a year before he married Mary. We should all have liked her a great deal better; and papa and mamma always think it was her great friend Lady Russell's doing that she did not. They think Charles might not be learned and bookish enough to please Lady Russell, and that, therefore, she persuaded Anne to refuse him."

This was a travesty of the real state of matters with a vengeance; and there had been just that degree of feeling and curiosity about her in Captain Wentworth's manner which must give Anne extreme agitation and keep her rooted to the spot, though she heard no more.

As soon as she could she went after Mary, and it is a relief when all the party are again collected, with the

addition of Charles Hayter, whom Charles Musgrove and Henrietta brought back with them as might have been conjectured. There had been a withdrawing on the gentleman's side, a relenting on the lady's, and they are very glad to be together again. Henrietta looks a little ashamed but very well pleased, Charles Hayter exceedingly happy, and they are devoted to each other on their way back to Uppercross.

Everything now marks out Louisa for Captain Wentworth, and they walk side by side nearly as much as the other two. The party are thus separated into three divisions, with Anne tired enough to be very glad of Charles Musgrove's disengaged arm. "But Charles, though in very good humour with her, was out of temper with his wife. Mary had shown herself disobliging to him, and was now to reap the consequence, which consequence was his dropping her arm almost every moment to cut off the heads of some nettles in the hedge with his switch; and when Mary began to complain of it, and lament her being ill-used, according to custom, in being on the hedge-side, while Anne was never incommoded on the other, he dropped the arms of both, to hunt after a weasel which he had a momentary glimpse of, and they could hardly get him along at all." This boyish mode of expressing a pet is exquisitely characteristic of the ordinarily easy-going young fellow.

"The long meadow bordered a lane which their foot-path, at the end of it, was to cross, and when the party had all reached the gate of exit, the carriage advancing in the same direction, which had been some time heard, was just coming up, and proved to be Admiral Croft's gig. He and his wife had taken their intended drive and were returning home. Upon hearing how long a walk the young people had engaged in, they kindly offered a seat to any lady who might be particularly tired; it would save her full a mile, and they were going through Uppercross. The invitation was general, and generally declined. The Misses Musgrove were not all tired, and Mary was either offended

by not being asked before any of the others, or what Louisa called the Elliot pride could not endure to make a third in a one-horse chaise.

“The walking party had crossed the lane and were surmounting an opposite stile, and the Admiral was putting his horse into motion again, when Captain Wentworth cleared the hedge in a moment to say something to his sister. The something might be guessed by its effects.

“‘Miss Elliot, I am sure you are tired,’ cried Mrs. Croft; ‘do let us have the pleasure of taking you home?’

“Anne was still in the lane, and though instinctively beginning to decline, she was not allowed to proceed. The Admiral’s kind urgency came in support of his wife’s, and Captain Wentworth, without saying a word, turned to her, and quietly obliged her to be assisted into the carriage.

“Yes, he had done it; she was in the carriage, and felt that he had placed her there, that his will and his hands had done it, that she owed it to his perception of her fatigue and his resolution to give her rest. He could not forgive her, but he could not be unfeeling. Though perfectly careless of her, and though becoming attached to another, still he could not see her suffer without the desire of giving her relief.”

III.

Captain Wentworth learns that there is an old messmate with his family settled for the winter at Lyme. He goes to visit them, and comes back with such a glowing description of the beautiful neighbourhood that the young people at Uppercross are all eager to see it. Although it is so late in the season, a party is made up, consisting of Charles Musgrove, Mary, Anne, Henrietta,

Louisa, and Captain Wentworth, to drive to Lyme, stay the night there, and come back for next day's dinner. It is in connection with Lyme that we have Jane Austen's most finished bit of descriptive landscape-painting. Full of appreciation as it reads, it is sober and restrained indeed, contrasted with modern word-painting of sea and shore and sky. "The remarkable situation of the town, the principal street almost hurrying into the water, the walk to the Cobbe skirting round the pleasant little bay, which in the season is animated with bathing machines and company; the Cobbe itself, its old wonders and new improvements, with the very beautiful line of cliffs stretching out to the east of the town, are what the stranger's eye will seek; and a very strange stranger it must be who does not see charms in the immediate environs of Lyme to make him wish to know it better. The scenes in its neighbourhood,—Charmouth, with its high grounds and extensive sweeps of country, and still more its sweet retired bay, backed by dark cliffs, where fragments of low rock among the sands make it the happiest spot for watching the flow of the tide, for sitting in unwearied contemplation; the woody varieties of the cheerful village of Up-Lyme; and, above all, Pinney, with its green chasms between romantic rocks, where the scattered forest trees and orchards of luxuriant growth declare that many a generation must have passed away since the first partial falling of the cliff prepared the ground for such a state, where a scene so wonderful and so lovely is exhibited as may more than equal any of the resembling scenes of the far-famed Isle of Wight;—these places must be visited again and again to make the worth of Lyme understood."

Not only Captain Harville, Captain Wentworth's friend, and his wife are brought by Captain Wentworth to be introduced to his companions; Captain Benwick, another old friend, accompanies the others. Captain Benwick has a sad little history which renders him especially interesting. He had been engaged to Captain Harville's sister, and is still mourning her loss. "They

had been a year or two waiting for fortune and promotion. Fortune came, his prize-money as lieutenant being great. Promotion, too, came *at last*; but Fanny did not live to know it. She had died the preceding summer when he was at sea."

"And yet," said Anne to herself, "he has not, perhaps, a more sorrowing heart than I have."

Captain Harville, who looks sensible and benevolent, is delicate and lame. Captain Benwick has a pleasing face and a melancholy air, just as he ought to have. Mrs. Harville shows the same good feeling as her husband, and nothing can be more pleasant than their desire to consider the whole party as friends of their own.

Captains Harville and Benwick pay a visit to the inn in the evening. Captain Benwick's spirits do not seem fit for the mirth of the party, and Anne kindly talks to him of their favourite books.

Anne and Henrietta, the earliest risers next morning, agree to take a stroll down to the sea before breakfast. Captain Wentworth and Louisa come after the two others. As they are all returning to town, at the steps leading up from the beach, a gentleman about to descend, politely draws back and waits. As they pass him Anne's face catches his eye, and he looks at her with evident admiration. "She was looking remarkably well; her very regular, very pretty features having the bloom and freshness of youth restored by the fine wind which had been blowing on her complexion, and by the animation of eye which it had produced. It was evident that the gentleman (completely a gentleman in manners) admired her exceedingly. Captain Wentworth looked round at her instantly in a way which showed his noticing it. He gave her a momentary glance, a glance of brightness, which seemed to say, 'That man is struck with you, and even I at this moment see something like Anne Elliot again.'"

After the party have returned to the inn, Anne, in passing quickly from her own room to the dining-room, had nearly run against the same gentleman as he came

out of an adjoining apartment. "This second meeting, short as it was, also proved again, by the gentleman's looks, that he thought hers very lovely, and by the readiness and propriety of his apologies, that he was a man of exceedingly good manners. He seemed about thirty, and though not handsome, had an agreeable person. Anne felt that she should like to know who he was."

"They had nearly done breakfast when the sound of a carriage, almost the first they had heard since entering Lyme, drew half the party to the window. It was a gentleman's carriage, a curriele, but only coming round from the stable-yard to the front door. Somebody must be going away. It was driven by a servant in mourning.

"The word curriele made Charles Musgrove jump up, that he might compare it with his own; and the whole six were collected to look, by the time the owner of the curriele was to be seen issuing from the door, amidst the bows and civilities of the household, and taking his seat to drive off."

"Ah!" cried Captain Wentworth, instantly, and with half a glance at Anne, "it is the very man we passed."

"The waiter came into the room soon afterwards.

"'Pray,' said Captain Wentworth, immediately, 'can you tell us the name of the gentleman who has just gone away?'

"'Yes, sir, a Mr. Elliot, a gentleman of large fortune, came in last night from Sidmouth, and going on now for Crewkerne, on his way to Bath and London.'

"'Elliot!' Many had looked at each other, and many had repeated the name before all this had been got through, even by the smart rapidity of a waiter.

"'Bless me!' cried Mary; 'it must be our cousin, it must be our Mr. Elliot, it must, indeed!—Charles, Anne, must not it? In mourning, you see, just as our Mr. Elliot must be. How very extraordinary! In the

same inn with us, Anne ; must not it be our Mr. Elliot, my father's next heir ? Pray, sir,' turning to the waiter, 'did not you hear—did not his servant say—whether he belonged to the Kellynch family ?'

"'No, ma'am ; he did not mention no particular family ; but he said his master was a very rich gentleman, and would be a baronight, some day.'

"'There, you see,' cried Mary, in an ecstasy, 'just as I said ! Heir to Sir Walter Elliot ! I was sure that would come out, if it was so ! Depend upon it, that is a circumstance which his servants take care to publish, wherever he goes. But, Anne, only conceive how extraordinary ! I wish I had looked at him more. I wish we had been aware in time who it was, that he might have been introduced to us. What a pity that we should not have been introduced to each other ! Do you think he had the Elliot countenance ? I hardly looked at him, I was looking at the horses ; but I think he had something of the Elliot countenance. I wonder the arms did not strike me. Oh ! the great-coat was hanging over the panel, and hid the arms—so it did ; otherwise, I am sure I should have observed them, and the livery, too. If the servant had not been in mourning, one should have known him by the livery.'

"'Putting all these very extraordinary circumstances together,' said Captain Wentworth, 'we must consider it to be the arrangement of Providence that you should not be introduced to your cousin.'"

Though Anne tries to quiet Mary by reminding her of the terms on which her father is with his heir, still it is a secret gratification to have seen her cousin, and to know that the future owner of Kellynch is undoubtedly a gentleman, and has an air of good sense.

Breakfast over, Captain and Mrs. Harville, with Captain Benwick, arrive to join the visitors in their last walk about Lyme.

Captain Harville says aside to Anne that she has done a good deed in making that "poor fellow," Captain Benwick, talk so much.

Anne reminds him gently of what time does in every case of affliction, and remarks that Captain Benwick's is still of a recent date, only last summer.

"Ay, true enough," with a deep sigh, "only June."

"And not known to him, perhaps, so soon?"

"Not till the first week in August, when he came home from the Cape, just made into the *Grappler*. I was at Plymouth, dreading to hear of him; he sent in letters, but the *Grappler* was under orders for Portsmouth. There the news must follow him, but who was to tell it? Not I. I would as soon be run up to the yard-arm. Nobody could do it but that good fellow" (pointing to Captain Wentworth). "'The *Laconia* had come into Plymouth the week before; no danger of her being sent to sea again. He stood his chance for the risk; wrote up for leave of absence, but without waiting the return, travelled night and day till he got to Portsmouth, rowed off to the *Grappler* that instant, and never left the poor fellow for a week. That's what he did, and nobody else could have saved poor James. You may think, Miss Elliott, whether he is dear to us!"

The pleasure-seekers part with the Harvilles at their own door, and turn at the special request of Louisa Musgrove, with only Captain Benwick attending them to the last, to walk along the Cobbe once more, before setting out for Uppercross.

"There was too much wind to make the high part of the new Cobbe pleasant for the ladies, and they agreed to get down the steps to the lower, and all were contented to pass quietly and carefully down the steep flight excepting Louisa; she must be jumped down them by Captain Wentworth. In all their walks he had had to jump her from the stiles; the sensation was delightful to her. The hardness of the pavement for her feet made him less willing upon the present occasion; he did it, however, she was safely down, and instantly to show her enjoyment, ran up the steps to be jumped down again. He advised her against it, thought the jar too great; but no, he reasoned and talked in vain, she

smiled and said, 'I am determined I will;' he put out his hands; she was too precipitate by half a second, she fell on the pavement on the Lower Cobbe, and was taken up lifeless! There was no wound, no blood, no visible bruise; but her eyes were closed, she breathed not, her face was like death. The horror of that moment to all that stood around!

"Captain Wentworth, who had caught her up, knelt with her in his arms, looking on her with a face as pallid as her own, in an agony of silence. 'She is dead! She is dead!' screamed Mary, catching hold of her husband, and contributing with his own horror to make him immovable; and in another moment Henrietta, sinking under the conviction, lost her senses too, and would have fallen on the steps but for Captain Benwick and Anne, who caught and supported her between them."

"'Is there no one to help me?' were the first words which burst from Captain Wentworth in a tone of despair, and as if all his own strength were gone.

"'Go to him! go to him!' cried Anne; 'for Heaven's sake go to him. I can support her myself. Leave me and go to him. Rub her hands, rub her temples! here are salts; * take them, take them!'"

Captain Benwick obeyed, and Charles at the same moment disengaging himself from his wife, they were both with him, and Louisa was raised up and supported more firmly between them, and everything was done that Anne had prompted, but in vain; while Captain Wentworth, staggering against the wall for his support, exclaimed, in the bitterest agony, "Oh, God! her father and mother!"

"A surgeon!" said Anne. He caught the word; it seemed to rouse him at once, and saying only, "True, true, a surgeon this instant," was darting away, when Anne eagerly suggested—

* In those days no lady was to be found without her small bottle of 'smelling salts' or her vinaigrette with aromatic vinegar. Have we fewer headaches now-a-days, or are we more patient in bearing them?

“Captain Benwick! would it not be better for Captain Benwick? He knows where a surgeon is to be found.”

“Every one capable of thinking felt the advantage of the idea, and in a moment (it was all done in rapid moments) Captain Benwick had resigned the poor corpse-like figure entirely to the brother’s care, and was off for the town with the utmost rapidity.

“As to the wretched party left behind, it could scarcely be said which of the three, who were completely rational, was suffering most; Captain Wentworth, Anne, and Charles who, really a very affectionate brother, hung over Louisa with sobs of grief, and could only turn his eyes from one sister to see the other in a state as insensible, or to witness the hysterical agitation of his wife, calling on him for help which he could not give.

“Anne, attending with all the strength and zeal and thought which instinct supplied, to Henrietta, still tried at intervals to suggest comfort to the others, tried to quiet Mary, to animate Charles, to assuage the feelings of Captain Wentworth. Both seemed to look to her for directions.*

“‘Anne, Anne!’ cried Charles, ‘what is to be done next? What, in Heaven’s name, is to be done next?’

“Captain Wentworth’s eyes were also turned towards her.

“‘Had she not better be carried to the inn? Yes, I am sure; carry her gently to the inn.’

“‘Yes, yes, to the inn,’ repeated Captain Wentworth, comparatively collected and eager to be doing something. ‘I will carry her myself.’”

The Harvilles meet the melancholy cavalcade, and Louisa is carried to their house instead of to the inn. A surgeon pronounces that her limbs have escaped, and

* The manner in which the set-aside, quiet woman, who has yet so much more strength and power of resource than the others, comes to the front, whether she will or no, in the moment of trouble, is fine and true to nature.

though there is concussion of the brain, the case is not by any means hopeless.

In the end, Captain Wentworth, Henrietta Musgrove, and Anne return to Uppercross to break the news of the accident to the old Musgroves, while Charles and Mary remain with the sufferer.

“It was growing quite dusk, however, before the travellers were in the neighbourhood of Uppercross, and there had been total silence among them for some time, Henrietta leaning back in the corner, with a shawl over her face, giving the hope of her having cried herself to sleep; when, as they were going up their last hill, Anne found herself all at once addressed by Captain Wentworth. In a low, cautious voice, he said, “I have been considering what we had best do. She must not appear at first. She could not stand it. I have been thinking whether you had not better remain in the carriage with her while I go in and break it to Mr. and Mrs. Musgrove. Do you think this a good plan?”

“She did; he was satisfied and said no more. But the remembrance of the appeal remained a pleasure to her, as a proof of friendship and of deference for her judgment; a great pleasure, and when it became a sort of parting proof its value did not lessen.

“When the distressing communication at Uppercross was over, and he had seen the father and mother quite as composed as could be hoped, and the daughter all the better for being with them, he announced his intention of returning in the same carriage to Lyme, and when the horses were baited, he was off.”

Anne only remains two days longer at Uppercross with the Musgroves. The accounts which Charles Musgrove brings of Louisa are favourable on the whole. A speedy cure cannot be looked for, but she is going on as well as can be expected. The Harvilles are kindness itself.

Anne persuades Mr. and Mrs. Musgrove and Henrietta to join the others by going into lodgings at Lyme. They can at least be of use by taking care of the Har-

ville children. "They were so happy in the decision that Anne was delighted with what she had done, and felt that she could not spend her last morning at Upper-cross better, than in assisting their preparations and sending them off at an early hour, though her being left to the solitary range of the house was the consequence.

"She was the last, excepting the little boys, at the Cottage; she was the very last, the only remaining one of all that had filled and animated both houses, of all that had given Upper-cross its cheerful character. A few days had made a change indeed.

"If Louisa recovered, it would all be the same, more than former happiness would be restored. There could not be a doubt, to her mind there was none, of what would follow her recovery. A few months hence, and the rooms now deserted, occupied but by her silent, pensive self, might be filled again with all that was happy and gay, all that was glowing and bright in prosperous love, all that was most unlike Anne Elliot."

I think my readers will endorse the cordial praise bestowed by Captain Harville on Anne at a later part of the story: "good soul!" The simple words may be lightly esteemed, as they are frequently bestowed indiscriminately and contemptuously—and what a lowered standard of morality the contempt involves—but how much they imply. Good, true, courageous, christian Anne Elliot, true to herself, to Captain Wentworth, to Louisa Musgrove, to every living creature! Anne Elliot is worth scores—hundreds—of the outrageous, reckless, self-indulgent, and idiotic heroines frequently held up for admiration and imitation.

IV.

At Kellynch Lodge, with Lady Russell, Anne has to fall into a new, or rather an old set of interests, in which

the house her father has taken in Camden Place, Bath, and the disagreeable fact that Mrs. Clay, the daughter of Sir Walter Elliot's agent, and a humble companion of Elizabeth, is still on a visit there, figure prominently ; while Anne's thoughts are still hovering, in spite of herself, about Lyme and her friends there.

Elizabeth Elliot's last letter to Kellynch Lodge has communicated an unexpected piece of news of some interest. There has been a reconciliation between the head of the house and his heir. Mr. Elliot is in Bath, and has called more than once or twice in Camden Place. If Elizabeth and her father are right, he is now as anxious to renew and proclaim the connexion as he had formerly been to treat it with scorn.

A degree of unlooked-for warmth in the welcome home which Anne receives does her good, but Jane Austen is careful to mention that Anne's father and sister are glad to see her for the sake of showing her the house and furniture. Besides, they are unwontedly happy in finding themselves people of consequence in Bath, and in receiving once more the attentions of Mr. Elliot. He is now everything and without a fault in his cousins' eyes. Even the old offence of his marriage—when Sir Walter had destined him for Elizabeth, and Elizabeth had fully acquiesced in the arrangement—has been partly smoothed away. A friend of Mr. Elliot's, a Colonel Wallis, whom Mr. Elliot has introduced to Sir Walter, mentions in confidence various particulars which soften the delinquency. The late Mrs. Elliot had not been a woman of family, but she had been a very fine woman, with a large fortune, excessively in love with her husband.

Anne is rendered very uneasy by Mrs. Clay's protracted stay in Camden Place, and by the increasing influence she is gaining over her host as well as over his eldest daughter. That Mrs. Clay cherishes designs of becoming Lady Elliot, opposed as the match might seem to Sir Walter's vanity and conceit, Anne does not doubt, and she begins to fear more and more that Mrs.

Clay's designs may prove successful. How relentlessly Anne is made to gauge her father's character is shown by the impetus given to her fears, in the course of a conversation with him. He has just complimented Anne on her greater clearness and freshness of complexion, and attributed the improvement to Gowland's Lotion. On her saying she uses no lotion, he expresses his surprise. She cannot do better than she is doing, otherwise he would recommend Gowland—the constant use of Gowland during the spring. Mrs. Clay has been using it at his recommendation, and Anne can see what it has done for her; Anne can see how it has carried away her freckles.

The most alarming symptom of all is, that it does not appear to Anne Mrs. Clay's freckles are lessened.

But there is no use in warning Elizabeth, without whose countenance Mrs. Clay could not stay on in Camden Place. Mrs. Clay's flattery infatuates Elizabeth, and in any circumstances she would have been incapable of accepting beforehand a suggestion so injurious and disagreeable to her, especially if it came from her sister Anne.

Lady Russell is quite won by Mr. Elliot, whose steadiness of character and coolness of judgment, in addition to what she believes to be his high principles and warmth of heart, unite all the recommendations which she prizes most highly. She is delighted to find that his previous marriage—suspected to have been an unhappy one—has not soured him, or prevented him from thinking of another wife—not in the person of Elizabeth, but in that of Anne Elliot, as is soon plain to Lady Russell. She rejoices to believe that Anne is at last done justice to, in becoming the object of Mr. Elliot's constant presence in Camden Place. Anne, in her turn, allows herself to be more and more pleased with her cousin's good qualities and friendship, although she still retains doubts of the consistency of his sentiments and behaviour, and of the motives which actuate him.

V.

A grand triumph is provided for Sir Walter and his eldest daughter, which in the meantime may happily prove a distraction and protection to the former from the arts of Mrs. Clay. "The Bath paper one morning announced the arrival of the Dowager Viscountess Dalrymple and her daughter, the Honourable Miss Carteret, and all the comfort of No. —, Camden Place, was swept away for many days; for the Dalrymples (in Anne's opinion, most unfortunately) were cousins of the Elliots, and the agony was how to introduce themselves properly."

The feat is accomplished, and the Elliots visit in Laura Place, where the Dowager Viscountess has established herself. They have the cards of the Dowager Viscountess Dalrymple and the Honourable Miss Carteret to be arranged wherever they may be most visible, and "our cousins in Laura Place," "our cousins Lady Dalrymple and Miss Carteret," are talked of to everybody.

While Sir Walter and Elizabeth Elliot are sedulously cultivating their noble cousins, Anne, in broad contrast to her father and sister, is gladly renewing her acquaintance with an old schoolfellow whom she discovers in Bath in reduced circumstances: Mrs. Smith, as Miss Hamilton, had been kind to Anne Elliot, and now it is Anne's turn to repay the kindness. Mrs. Smith is a widow, and poor. She is also for the present a complete cripple from the effects of rheumatic fever, though she is not more than thirty-one years of age. She has come to Bath on account of her lameness, and is living in a humble way near the hot baths. A mutual friend makes Anne acquainted with the position of her former schoolfellow. The first meeting is awkward and painful. Twelve years have changed Anne from the blooming, silent, unformed girl of fifteen, to the elegant little woman of eight-and-twenty; and

twelve years have transformed the fine-looking, well-grown Miss Hamilton, in all the glow of health and confidence of prosperity, into a poor, infirm, helpless widow.

But soon the old interest which the girl-friends had felt in each other, revives. Anne finds Mrs. Smith sensible and agreeable, and has reason to admire in her "that elasticity of spirit, that disposition to be comforted, that power of turning readily from evil to good, and of finding employment out of herself, which is the choicest gift of Heaven."*

It is February, a month since Anne had come to Bath. She is eager for news from Uppercross, when a thicker letter than usual is delivered to her from Mary, with Admiral and Mrs. Croft's compliments. The Crofts must be in Bath.

Mary begins in her usual strain, with many grievances, congratulating herself, however, that the holidays are over. She believes no children ever had such long holidays as the young Musgroves have. The carriage has gone that day to bring Louisa and the Harvilles on the following day. Charles and Mary are not invited to dine with them, however, till the day after, and so on, to the close. But Mary has put the letter into an envelope containing as much more writing, which like the typical postscript is the cream of the epistle:—"I have something to communicate that will astonish you not a little. She (Louisa) and the Harvilles came on Tuesday very safely, and in the evening we went to ask how she did; when we were rather surprised not to find Captain Benwick of the party, for he had been invited as well as the Harvilles; and what do you think was the reason? Neither more nor less than his being in love with Louisa, and not choosing to venture to Uppercross till he had had

* The perfect simplicity, unaffectedness, and absence of self-consciousness—including any consciousness of merit, displayed in Anne's kindness to her former companion, is very refreshing, after those ostentatious representations of doing good, and of making private stock out of public benevolence, which we are constantly encountering both in real life and in books.

an answer from Mr. Musgrove ; for it was all settled between him and her before she came away, and he had written to her father by Captain Harville. True, upon my honour ! Are you not astonished ? I shall be surprised at least if you ever received a hint of it, for I never did. Mrs. Musgrove protests solemnly that she knew nothing of the matter. We are all very well pleased, however ; for though it is not equal to her marrying Captain Wentworth, it is infinitely better than Charles Hayter ; and Mr. Musgrove has written his consent, and Captain Benwick is expected to-day. Mrs. Harville says her husband feels a good deal on his poor sister's account ; but, however, Louisa is a great favourite with both. Indeed, Mrs. Harville and I quite agree that we love her the better for having nursed her. Charles wonders what Captain Wentworth will say ; but if you remember I never thought him attached to Louisa ; I never could see anything of it. And this is the end, you see, of Captain Benwick's being supposed to be an admirer of yours. How Charles could take such a thing into his head was always incomprehensible to me. I hope he will be more agreeable now. Certainly not a great match for Louisa Musgrove, but a million times better than marrying amongst the Hayters."

"Mary need not have feared her sister's being in any degree prepared for the news. She had never in her life been more astonished. Captain Benwick and Louisa Musgrove ! It was almost too wonderful for belief, and it was with the greatest effort that she could remain in the room, preserve an air of calmness, and endure the common questions of the moment."

"In her own room she tried to comprehend it. Well might Charles wonder how Captain Wentworth would feel ! Perhaps he had quitted the field, had given Louisa up, had ceased to love, had found he did not love her. She could not endure the idea of treachery or levity, or anything akin to ill-usage between him and his friend."

"Captain Benwick and Louisa Musgrove ! The

high-spirited, joyous, talking Louisa Musgrove, and the dejected, thinking, feeling, reading Captain Benwick, seemed each of them everything that would not suit the other. Their minds must be dissimilar! Where could have been the attraction? The answer soon presented itself: it had been in situation. They had been thrown together several weeks; they had been living in the same small family party. Since Henrietta's coming away, they must have been depending almost entirely on each other, and Louisa, just recovering from illness, had been in an interesting state, and Captain Benwick was not inconsolable.

"She saw no reason against their being happy. Louisa had fine naval fervour to begin with, and they would soon grow more alike. He would gain cheerfulness, and she would have to be an enthusiast for Scott and Lord Byron; nay, that was probably learnt already: of course they had fallen in love over poetry. The idea of Louisa Musgrove turned into a person of literary taste and sentimental reflection was amusing, but she had no doubt of its being so. The day at Lyme, the fall from the Cobbe, might influence her health, her nerves, her courage, her character to the end of her life, as thoroughly as it appeared to have influenced her fate.*

VI.

Captain Wentworth is on his way to Bath, and the very next time Anne walks out she meets him. "Mr. Elliot was attending his two cousins and Mrs. Clay. They were in Milsom Street. It began to rain, not much, but enough to make shelter desirable for women, and quite enough to make it very desirable for Miss

* The sudden bestowal of Louisa Musgrove and Captain Benwick on each other is one of the most genuine and delightful surprises of fiction. It is not only a triumphant testimony to how the whole destiny, not merely of one person, but of a group of persons, may be

Elliot to have the advantage of being conveyed home in Lady Dalrymple's carriage, which was seen waiting at a little distance. She, Anne, and Mrs. Clay, therefore, turned into Molland's, while Mr. Elliot stepped to Lady Dalrymple to request her assistance. He soon joined them again, successful, of course: Lady Dalrymple would be most happy to take them home, and would call for them in a few minutes.

“Her ladyship's carriage was a barouche, and did not hold more than four with any comfort. Miss Carteret was with her mother; consequently it was not reasonable to expect accommodation for all the three Camden Place ladies. There could be no doubt as to Miss Elliot, but it occupied a little time to settle the point of civility between the other two. The rain was a mere trifle, and Anne was most sincere in preferring a walk with Mr. Elliot. But the rain was also a mere trifle to Mrs. Clay; she would hardly allow it even to drop at all, and her boots were so thick—much thicker than Miss Anne's; in short, her civility rendered her quite as anxious to be left to walk with Mr. Elliot as Anne could be, and it was discussed between them with a generosity so polite and so determined, that the others were obliged to settle it for them, Miss Elliot maintaining that Mrs. Clay had a little cold already, and Mr. Elliot deciding on appeal that his cousin Anne's boots were rather the thickest.

“It was fixed, accordingly, that Mrs. Clay should be of the party in the carriage; and they had just reached this point when Anne, as she sat near the window, descried most decidedly and distinctly Captain Wentworth walking down the street.

“Her start was perceptible only to herself; but she instantly felt that she was the greatest simpleton in the

altered by what seems the simplest accident—the turning of a straw; it is one of those bits of warm, homely, human inconsistency which baffle all anticipation, are worth a hundred bloodless, laboured, logical sequences, but can only be fitly conceived and carried out in a story, by a great artist.

world, the most unaccountable and absurd. For a few minutes she saw nothing before her; it was all confusion. She was lost, and when she had scolded back her senses, she found the others still waiting, and Mr. Elliot (always obliging) just setting off for Union Street on a commission of Mrs. Clay's.

"She now felt a great inclination to go to the outer door. Captain Wentworth must be out of sight. She would see if it rained. She was sent back, however, in a moment by the entrance of Captain Wentworth himself, among a party of gentlemen and ladies, evidently his acquaintance, and whom he must have joined a little below Milsom Street. He was more obviously struck and confused by the sight of her than she had ever observed before. He looked quite red. For the first time since their renewed acquaintance she felt she was betraying the least sensibility of the two. She had the advantage of him in the preparation of the last few moments. All the overpowering, blinding, bewildering, first effects of strong surprise were over with her; still, however, she had enough to feel. It was agitation, pain, pleasure—a something between delight and misery.

"He spoke to her, and then turned away. The character of his manner was embarrassment. She could not have called it either cold, or friendly, or anything so certainly as embarrassed.

"After a short interval, however, he came towards her, and spoke again. Mutual inquiries on common subjects passed, neither of them much the wiser for what they heard, and Anne continuing fully sensible of his being less at ease than formerly. They had, by dint of being so much together, got to speak to each other with a considerable portion of apparent indifference and calmness, but he could not do it now. Time had changed him, or Louisa had changed him. There was consciousness of some sort or other. He looked very well, not as if he had been suffering either in health or spirits; and he talked of Uppercross, of the Mus-

groves—nay, even of Louisa—and had even a momentary look of his own arch significance as he named her ; but yet it was Captain Wentworth, not comfortable, not easy, not able to feign that he was.

“It did not surprise but it grieved Anne to observe that Elizabeth would not know him. She saw that he saw Elizabeth ; that Elizabeth saw him ; that there was complete internal recognition on each side. She was convinced that he was ready to be acknowledged as an acquaintance, expecting it, and she had the pain of seeing her sister turn away with unalterable coldness.

“Lady Dalrymple’s carriage, for which Miss Elliot was growing very impatient, now drew up ; the servant came in to announce it. It was beginning to rain again, and altogether there was a delay, and a bustle, and a talking which must make all the little crowd in the shop understand that Lady Dalrymple was calling to convey Miss Elliot. At last Miss Elliot and her friend, unattended but by the servant (for there was no cousin returned), were walking off, and Captain Wentworth, watching them, turned again to Anne, and by manner, rather than words, was offering his services to her.

“‘I am much obliged to you,’ was her answer, ‘but I am not going with them. The carriage would not accommodate so many. I walk : I prefer walking.’

“‘But it rains.’

“‘Oh, very little. Nothing that I regard.’

“After a moment’s pause he said, ‘Although I came only yesterday, I have equipped myself properly for Bath already, you see’—pointing to a new umbrella. ‘I wish you would make use of it, if you are determined to walk, though I think it would be more prudent to let me get you a chair.’

“She was very much obliged to him, but declined it all, repeating her conviction that the rain would come to nothing at present, and adding, ‘I am only waiting for Mr. Elliot. He will be here in a moment, I am sure.’

“She had hardly spoken the words when Mr. Elliot walked in. Captain Wentworth recollected him perfectly. There was no difference between him and the man who had stood on the steps at Lyme, admiring Anne as she passed, except in the air, and look, and manners of the privileged relation and friend. He came in with eagerness, and appeared to see and think only of her, apologised for his stay, was grieved to have kept her waiting, and anxious to get her away without further loss of time and before the rain increased; and in another moment they walked off together, her arm under his, a gentle and embarrassed glance and a ‘Good morning to you’ being all that she had time for as she passed away.

“As soon as they were out of sight the ladies and Captain Wentworth’s party began talking of them.

“‘Mr. Elliot does not dislike his cousin, I fancy.’

“‘Oh, no! that is clear enough. One can guess what will happen there. He is always with them; half lives in the family, I believe. What a very good-looking man!’

“‘Yes, and Miss Atkinson, who dined with him once at the Wallises, says he is the most agreeable man she ever was in company with.’

“‘She is pretty, I think, Anne Elliott, very pretty, when one comes to look at her. It is not the fashion to say so, but I confess I admire her more than her sister.’

“‘Oh, so do I.’

“‘And so do I. No comparison. But the men are all wild after Miss Elliot. Anne is too delicate for them.’”

A day or two passes without further encounters. Anne longs for a concert patronised by Lady Dalrymple. “Sir Walter, his two daughters, and Mrs. Clay were the earliest of all their party at the Rooms in the evening, and as Lady Dalrymple must be waited for, they took their station by one of the fires in the Octagon Room. But hardly were they so settled, when the door opened

again, and Captain Wentworth walked in alone. Anne was the nearest to him, and making yet a little advance, she instantly spoke. He was preparing only to bow and pass on, but her gentle ‘How do you do?’ brought him out of the straight line, to stand near her and make inquiries in return, in spite of the formidable father and sister in the background.

“While they were speaking, a whispering between her father and Elizabeth caught her ear. She could not distinguish, but she must guess the subject, and on Captain Wentworth making a distant bow, she comprehended that her father had judged so well as to give him that simple acknowledgment of acquaintance, and she was just in time by a side glance to see a slight curtsey from Elizabeth herself. This, though late and reluctant and ungracious, was yet better than nothing, and her spirits improved.

“After talking, however, of the weather, and Bath, and the concert, their conversation began to flag, and so little was said at last, that she was expecting him to go every moment; but he did not; he seemed in no hurry to leave her; and presently, with renewed spirit, with a little smile, a little glow, he said—

“‘I have hardly seen you since our day at Lyme. I am afraid you must have suffered from the shock, and the more from its not overpowering you at the time.’

“She assured him she had not.

“‘It was a frightful hour,’ said he, ‘a frightful day!’ and he passed his hand across his eyes, as if the remembrance were still too painful; but in a moment, half smiling again, added, ‘The day has produced some effects, however; has had some consequences which must be considered the reverse of frightful. When you had the presence of mind to suggest that Benwick would be the properest person to fetch a surgeon, you could have little idea of his being eventually one of those most concerned in her recovery.’

“‘Certainly, I could have none. But it appears—I

should hope it would be—a very happy match. There are on both sides good principles and good temper.’

“‘Yes,’ said he, looking not exactly forward; ‘but there I think ends the resemblance. With all my soul I wish them happy, and rejoice over every circumstance in favour of it. They have no difficulties to contend with at home, no opposition, no caprice, no delays. The Musgroves are behaving like themselves, most honourable and kindly, only anxious with true parental heart to promote their daughter’s comfort. All this is much, very much in favour of their happiness; more than perhaps——’

“He stopped; a sudden recollection seemed to occur, and to give him some taste of that emotion which was reddening Anne’s cheeks and fixing her eyes on the ground. After clearing his throat, however, he proceeded thus—‘I confess I do think there is a disparity, too great a disparity, and in a point no less essential than mind. I regard Louisa Musgrove as a very amiable, sweet-tempered girl, and not deficient in understanding; but Benwick is something more. He is a clever man, a reading man; and I confess that I do consider his attaching himself to her with some surprise. Had it been the effect of gratitude, had he learnt to love her because he believed her to be preferring him,* it would have been another thing. But I have no reason to suppose it so. It seems, on the contrary, to have been a perfectly spontaneous, untaught feeling on his side, and this surprises me. A man like him, in his situation, with a heart pierced, wounded, almost broken! Fanny Harville was a very superior creature, and his attachment to her was indeed attachment. A man does not recover from such a devotion of the heart to such a woman! He ought not; he does not.’

“Either from the consciousness, however, that his friend had recovered, or from some other consciousness, he went no farther; and Anne, who—in spite of the agitated voice in which the latter part had been uttered,

* A hint of defence for what might have been his own case.

and in spite of all the various noises of the room, the almost ceaseless slam of the door, and ceaseless buzz of persons walking through—had distinguished every word, was struck, gratified, confused, and beginning to breathe very quick, and feel a hundred things in a moment.”

The entrance-door opens again, and “Lady Dalrymple, Lady Dalrymple!” is the welcome sound. Lady Dalrymple and Miss Carteret, escorted by Mr. Elliot and Colonel Wallis, advance into the room. Anne is included in the group and separated from Captain Wentworth. But she has learnt in the last ten minutes more of his feelings towards Louisa, more of all his feelings, than she dares to think of.

Upon Lady Russell’s appearance, the whole party proceed to go into the concert-room, and be of all the consequence in their power; draw as many eyes, excite as many whispers, and disturb as many people as they can.

“Very, very happy were both Elizabeth and Anne Elliot as they walked in. Elizabeth, arm-in-arm with Miss Carteret, and looking on the broad back of the Dowager Viscountess Dalrymple before her, had nothing to wish for which did not seem within her reach; and Anne—but it would be an insult to the nature of Anne’s felicity to draw any comparison between it and her sister’s—the origin of one all selfish vanity, of the other all generous attachment.

“Anne saw nothing, thought nothing of the brilliancy of the room; the happiness was from within. Her eyes were bright and her cheeks glowed, but she knew nothing about it. His choice of subjects, his expressions, and still more his manner and look, had been such as she could see in only one light. His opinion of Louisa Musgrove’s inferiority—an opinion which he had seemed solicitous to give—his wonder at Captain Benwick, his feelings as to a fresh, strong attachment, sentences begun which he could not finish, his half-averted eyes, and more than half-expressive

glances—all, all declared that he had a heart returning to her at least; that anger, resentment, avoidance were no more, and that they were succeeded, not merely by friendship and regard, but by the tenderness of the past; yes, some share of the tenderness of the past! He must love her.”

Anne Elliot is from first to last full of delicate self-respect and retiring womanliness, yet Jane Austen makes her as incapable of resentful obduracy to Captain Wentworth's tardy relenting, as of coquettish trifling with his revived affection. Anne is eager and willing to meet his overtures half way, and relieve him of the awkwardness of making them unsupported. To see her manner quite in the right light, one must remember what she owed him, for the wrong which she had done to both when she gave him up in the past. Her present free forgiveness of his recent avoidance and neglect hardly balances her renunciation of him eight years before.

“The party were divided and disposed of on two contiguous benches: Anne was among those on the foremost, and Mr. Elliot had manœuvred so well, with the assistance of his friend Colonel Wallis, as to have a seat by her. Miss Elliot, surrounded by her cousins, and the principal object of Colonel Wallis's gallantry, was quite contented.”

Anne has never liked a concert better—at least, during the first act. Towards the close of it, the necessity of explaining the words of an Italian song* to Mr. Elliot, brings down upon her rather too many gallant compliments from the gentleman. In the course of his praise, he manages to rouse her curiosity by hinting that he may have had longer acquaintance with her tastes and pursuits than she is aware of. In answer to her questions, he assures her that he has known her by report, long before she came to Bath. He has heard her described by one who knew her intimately. Her person,

* A familiarity with Italian used to be considered the graceful crown of a woman's accomplishments.

disposition, accomplishments, manner, were all familiar to him many years before.

Jane Austen remarks with great truth that no one can withstand the charm of such a mystery. "To have been described, long ago, to a recent acquaintance by nameless people, is irresistible. She wondered and questioned him eagerly, but in vain. He delighted in being asked, but he would not tell."

Anne can only think of Mr. Wentworth, the former curate of Monksford, in whose company Mr. Elliot may have been, but she does not mention the name.

"The name of Anne Elliot," said he, "has long had an interesting sound to me. Very long has it possessed a charm over my fancy; and if I dared I would breathe my wishes that the name might never change."

Before Anne can attempt an answer, she catches the name of Wentworth mentioned by her father in answer to an observation of Lady Dalrymple's: and from the lady, "A very fine young man, indeed. More air than one often sees in Bath. Irish, I dare say?"

"Anne's eyes had caught the right direction, and distinguished Captain Wentworth standing among a cluster of men at a little distance. As her eyes fell upon him, his seemed to be withdrawn from her.

"When she could give another glance, he had moved away. He could not have come nearer to her if he would, she was so surrounded and shut in, but she would rather have caught his eye.

"Mr. Elliot's speech, too, distressed her. She had no longer any inclination to talk to him. She wished him not so near her.

"The first act was over. Now she hoped for some beneficial change; and after a period of nothing-saying amongst the party, some of them did decide on going in quest of tea. Anne was one of the few who did not choose to move. She remained in her seat, and so did Lady Russell, but she had the pleasure of getting rid of Mr. Elliot; and she did not mean, whatever she might feel on Lady Russell's account, to shrink from

conversation with Captain Wentworth if he gave her opportunity. She was persuaded by Lady Russell's countenance that she had seen him.

"He did not come, however. The others returned, the room filled again, benches were re-claimed, and re-possessed.

"In re-settling themselves there were many changes, the result of which was favourable for her. Colonel Wallis declined sitting down again, and Mr. Elliot was invited by Elizabeth and Miss Carteret, in a manner not to be refused, to sit between them; and by some other removals, and a little scheming of her own, Anne was enabled to place herself much nearer the end of the bench than she had been before, much more within the reach of a passer-by. She could not do so without comparing herself with Miss Larolles, the inimitable Miss Larolles;* but still, she did it, and not with much happier effect, though she found herself at the very end of the bench before the concert closed.

"Such was her situation, with a vacant space at hand, when Captain Wentworth was again in sight. She saw him not far off; he saw her, too, yet he looked grave, and seemed irresolute, and only by very slow degrees came at last near enough to speak to her. She felt that something must be the matter. The difference between his present air and what it had been in the Octagon Room was strikingly great. Why was it? She thought of her father—of Lady Russell. Could there have been any unpleasant glances? He begun by speaking of the concert gravely, more like the Captain Wentworth of Uppercross; owned himself disappointed; had expected better singing; and, in short, must confess that he should not be sorry when it was over. Anne replied, and spoke of the performance so well, yet, in allowance for his feelings, so pleasantly, that his countenance improved, and he replied again, with almost a smile. They talked for a few minutes more; the improvement held: he even looked down

* The "rattle" of Madame D'Arblay's novel of "Cecilia."

towards the bench, as if he saw a place on it well worth occupying; when, at that moment, a touch on her shoulder obliged her to turn round. It came from Mr. Elliot. He begged her pardon, but she must be applied to, to explain Italian again. Miss Carteret was very anxious to have a general idea of what was next to be sung. Anne could not refuse, but never had she sacrificed to politeness with a more suffering spirit.

“A few minutes, though as few as possible, were inevitably consumed; and when her own mistress again—when able to turn and look, as she had done before—she found herself accosted by Captain Wentworth in a reserved yet hurried sort of farewell. He must wish her good night; he was going; he should get home as fast as he could.

“‘Is not the song worth staying for?’ said Anne, suddenly struck by an idea which made her yet more anxious to be encouraging.

“‘No!’ he replied, impressively; ‘there is nothing worth my staying for;’ and he was gone directly.

“‘Jealousy of Mr. Elliot.’ It was the only intelligible motive.”

During a call made on her old friend, Mrs. Smith, Anne is enlightened beyond the power of doubt with regard to her cousin, Mr. Elliot’s, unprincipled and heartless character. He was an old friend of the Smiths, and had long ago heard a great deal from Mrs. Smith about Anne Elliot. He helped to ruin Mr. Smith. He forsook the widow in her desolation. He has come to Bath for the purpose of preventing Sir Walter Elliot’s marriage to Mrs. Clay, with the probable loss of his own succession to the baronetcy. His admiration for Anne induces Mr. Elliot to propose to give himself the right of a son-in-law to hinder the consummation of her father’s folly.

Anne can only shudder at what might have been the possibility of such a marriage for her.

VII.*

Anne is just setting out for Lady Russell's when a knock at the door announces visitors, and Mr. and Mrs. Charles Musgrove are ushered into the room.

Anne is really glad to see them, and the others are not so sorry that they cannot put on a decent air of welcome, considerably increased when it is clear that these their nearest relatives have not arrived with any idea of accommodation in that house.

The young Musgroves are staying for a few days at the "White Hart" with old Mrs. Musgrove, Henrietta, and Captain Harville. The last has business of his own in Bath. Mrs. Musgrove and Henrietta are already come to buy wedding clothes. It was not then incumbent on every bride, in the rank of Henrietta and Louisa Musgrove, to have her trousseau from London and Paris. Such a place as Bath was sufficient for the requirements of all Somersetshire in that respect.

Anne walks off directly with Charles and Mary to their mother and sister. The enlightenment of Lady Russell is of necessity left for another day. Mr. Elliot's character has a reprieve of twenty-four hours.

Anne finds herself warmly greeted, even affectionately claimed to be with them during their stay, by Mrs. Musgrove and Henrietta, and falls naturally into her wonted ways of attention and assistance. "On Charles leaving them together, Anne was listening to Mrs. Musgrove's history of Louisa, and to Henrietta's of herself; giving opinions on business and recommendations to shops, with intervals of every help which Mary required; from altering her ribbon to settling her accounts, from finding her keys and assorting her trinkets, to trying to convince her she was not ill-used by anybody; while Mary, well amused as she generally

* The two capital chapters, of which the substance is now to be given, were written by Jane Austen to supersede a cancelled chapter in "Persuasion," withdrawn after she had finished the story.

was in her station at a window overlooking the entrance to the Pump-room, could not but have her moments of imagining.

“A morning of thorough confusion was to be expected. A large party in an hotel ensured a quick-changing, unsettled scene. One five minutes brought a note, the next a parcel; and Anne had not been there half an hour when their dining-room, spacious as it was, seemed half-filled. A party of steady old friends were seated round Mrs. Musgrove, and Charles came back with Captains Harville and Wentworth. The appearance of the latter could not be more than the surprise of the moment. It was impossible for her to have forgotten to feel that this arrival of their common friends must be soon bringing them together again. Their last meeting had been most important in opening his feelings; she had derived from it a delightful conviction; but she feared from his looks that the same unfortunate persuasion, which had hastened him away from the Concert-room, still governed. He did not seem to want to be near enough for conversation.

“‘Anne,’ cried Mary, still at her window, ‘there is Mrs. Clay, I am sure, standing under the colonnade, and a gentleman with her. I saw them turn the corner from Bath Street just now. They seem deep in talk. Who is it? Come and tell me. Good heavens! I recollect. It is Mr. Elliot himself.’

“‘No,’ cried Anne, quickly; ‘it cannot be. He was to leave Bath at nine this morning, and does not come back till to-morrow.’

“As she spoke she felt that Captain Wentworth was looking at her, the consciousness of which vexed and embarrassed her, and made her regret that she had said so much, simple as it was.

“Mary, resenting that she should be supposed not to know her own cousin, began talking very warmly about the family features, and protesting still more positively that it was Mr. Elliot, calling again upon Anne to come and look herself; but Anne did not mean to stir, and

tried to be cool and unconcerned. Her distress returned, however, on perceiving smiles and intelligent glances pass between two or three of the lady visitors, as if they believed themselves quite in the secret. It was evident that the report concerning her had spread, and a short pause succeeded, which seemed to ensure that it would now spread further.

“‘Do come, Anne,’ cried Mary—‘come and look yourself. You will be too late if you do not make haste. They are parting—they are shaking hands—he is turning away. Not know Mr. Elliot, indeed! You seem to have forgot all about Lyme.’

“To pacify Mary, and perhaps screen her own embarrassment, Anne did move quietly to the window. She was just in time to ascertain that it really was Mr. Elliot before he disappeared on one side, as Mrs. Clay walked quickly off on the other; and checking the surprise which she could not but feel at such an appearance of friendly conference between two persons of totally opposite interests, she calmly said, ‘Yes, it is Mr. Elliot, certainly. He has changed his hour of going, I suppose, that is all, or I may be mistaken,’ and walked back to her chair recomposed, and with the comfortable hope of having acquitted herself well.

“Captain Wentworth left his seat and walked to the fire-place, probably for the sake of walking away from it soon afterwards, and taking a station, with less bare-faced design, by Anne.

“‘You have not been long enough in Bath,’ said he, ‘to enjoy the evening parties of the place.’

“‘Oh, no, the usual character of them has nothing for me. I am no card-player.’

“‘You were not formerly, I know. You did not use to like cards, but time makes many changes.’

“‘I am not yet so much changed,’ cried Anne, and stopped, fearing she hardly knew what misconstruction. After waiting a few moments, he said, and as if it were the result of immediate feeling, ‘It is a period, indeed! Eight years and a half is a period.’

“Whether he would have proceeded farther was left to Anne’s imagination to ponder over in a calmer hour ; for while still hearing the sounds he had uttered, she was startled to other subjects by Henrietta, eager to get out and calling on her companions to lose no time, lest somebody else should come in.

“They were obliged to move. Anne talked of being perfectly ready, and tried to look it ; but she felt that could Henrietta have known the regret and reluctance of her heart in quitting the room, she would have found, in all her own sensations for her cousin, in the very security of his affection, wherewith to pity her.”

Their preparations are stopped short ; the door is thrown open for Sir Walter and Miss Elliot, whose entrance seems to cause a general chill.

Anne is satisfied with regard to one particular : Captain Wentworth is acknowledged again by each.

Elizabeth is revolving a great measure. She gives her invitations “To-morrow evening, to meet a few friends ; no formal party ;” and puts down her cards with “Miss Elliot at home,” and a courteous, comprehensive smile for all, and one smile and one card decidedly for Captain Wentworth. Elizabeth has been long enough in Bath to understand the importance in society of a man of such an air and appearance. The cards given, Sir Walter and Elizabeth rise and disappear.

Captain Wentworth has received the card with no more than a polite acknowledgment. Anne cannot think that he will accept such an offering as an atonement for the insolence of the past. He holds the card in his hand as if considering.

“‘Only think of Elizabeth’s including everybody,’ whispers Mary audibly. ‘I do not wonder Captain Wentworth is delighted. He cannot put the card out of his hand.’”

Anne catches his eye, sees his cheeks glow and his mouth form itself into an expression of contempt, and turns away that she may see no more.

The party separates—Anne going with the ladies.

She is begged to return and dine, but her spirits have been too long exerted, she is only fit for home. She promises to be with her friends the whole of the following morning, and closes the fatigues of the day by a toilsome walk to Camden Place.

Anne rouses herself from the never-ending self-questioning, "Will Captain Wentworth come or not?" to let Mrs. Clay know she has been seen with Mr. Elliot three hours after his being supposed to have left Bath. It seems to Anne there is guilt in Mrs. Clay's face, but the expression clears instantly. "Oh, dear! very true," exclaims Mrs. Clay. "Only think, Miss Elliot, to my great surprise I met with Mr. Elliot in Bath Street. I was never more astonished. He turned back and walked with me to the Pump Yard. He had been prevented setting off for Thornbury. He wanted to know how early he might be admitted to-morrow. He was full of 'to-morrow.'"

VIII.

One day only has passed since Anne's conversation with Mrs. Smith, but a keener interest has intervened; she must still defer her visit to Lady Russell. She cannot keep her appointment punctually, however; she is detained by rain. When she reaches the "White Hart" she finds herself neither quite in time, nor the first to arrive.

"The party before her were Mrs. Musgrove talking to Mrs. Croft, and Captain Harville to Captain Wentworth; and she immediately heard that Mary and Henrietta, too impatient to wait, had gone out the moment it had cleared, but would be back again soon, and that the strictest injunctions had been left with Mrs. Musgrove to keep her there till they returned. She had only to submit, and feel herself plunged at once in all the agitation of which she had merely laid her

account of tasting a little before the morning closed. There was no delay, no waste of time. She was deep in the happiness of such misery, or the misery of such happiness, instantly. Two minutes after her entering the room, Captain Wentworth said, 'We will write the letter we were talking of, Harville, now, if you will give me materials.'

"Materials were all at hand on a separate table; he went to it, and merely turning his back on them all, was engrossed with writing.

"Mrs. Musgrove was giving Mrs. Croft the history of her eldest daughter's engagement, and just in that inconvenient tone of voice which was perfectly audible, while it pretended to be in a whisper." The mother finishes with the assertion, "At any rate," said I, "it will be better than a long engagement."

Mrs. Croft chimes in heartily. She would rather have young people settle on a small income at once, and struggle with a few difficulties together, than be involved in a long engagement.

"Oh, dear, Mrs. Croft," cried Mrs. Musgrove, unable to let her finish her speech, "there is nothing I so abominate as a long engagement. It is what I always protested against for my children," with more strong objections to the same effect from both ladies.

"Anne found an unexpected interest here. She felt it in its application to herself—felt it in a nervous thrill all over her; and at the same moment that her eyes instinctively glanced towards the distant table, Captain Wentworth's pen ceased to move, his head was raised, pausing, listening, and he turned round the next instant to give a look—one quick, conscious look—at her.

Captain Harville, who has been hearing nothing, invites Anne to join him. "The window at which he stood was at the other end of the room from where the two ladies were sitting, and though nearer to Captain Wentworth's table, not very near. 'Look here,' said he, unfolding a parcel in his hand, and displaying a small miniature painting; 'do you know who that is?'

“‘Certainly : Captain Benwick.’”

He tells her he has been commissioned to get the miniature, which was painted for his sister, re-set for Louisa Musgrove. Anne, while entering into his feelings, so far vindicates Captain Benwick, by asserting the superior fidelity of women. “Oh!” cried Captain Harville, in a tone of strong feeling, “if I could but make you comprehend what a man suffers when he takes a last look at his wife and children, and watches the boat that he has sent them off in as long as it is in sight, and then turns away and says, ‘God knows whether we shall ever meet again!’ And then, if I could convey to you the glow of his soul when he does see them again; when, coming back after a twelve-month’s absence, perhaps, and obliged to put into another port, he calculates how soon it may be possible to get them there, pretending to deceive himself, and saying, ‘They cannot be here till such a day,’ but all the while hoping for them twelve hours sooner, and seeing them arrive at last, as if Heaven had given them wings, by many hours sooner still.’

“‘Oh!’ cried Anne, eagerly, ‘I hope I do justice to all that is felt by you, and by those who resemble you. God forbid that I should undervalue the warm and faithful feelings of any of my fellow-creatures! I should deserve utter contempt if I dared to suppose that true attachment and constancy were known only by women. No, I believe you capable of everything great and good in your married lives. I believe you equal to every important exertion, and to every domestic forbearance, so long as—if I may be allowed the expression—so long as you have an object: I mean while the woman you love lives, and lives for you. All the privilege I claim for my own sex (it is not a very enviable one, you need not covet it), is that of loving longest, when existence or when hope is gone.’

“She could not immediately have uttered another sentence; her heart was too full, her breath too much oppressed.

“‘You are a good soul!’ cried Captain Harville, putting his hand on her arm quite affectionately. ‘There is no quarrelling with you. And when I think of Benwick, my tongue is tied.’

“Their attention was called towards the others. Mrs. Croft was taking leave.

“‘Here, Frederick, you and I part company, I believe,’ said she. ‘I am going home, and you have an engagement with your friend. To-night we may have the pleasure of all meeting again at your party,’ turning to Anne. ‘We had your sister’s card yesterday, and I understood Frederick had a card, too, though I did not see it; and you are disengaged, Frederick, are you not, as well as ourselves?’

“Captain Wentworth was folding up a letter in great haste, and either could not, or would not, answer fully.

“‘Yes,’ said he, ‘very true. Here we separate; but Harville and I shall soon be after you, that is, Harville, if you are ready—I am, in half a minute. I know you will not be sorry to be off.’

“Mrs. Croft left them, and Captain Wentworth, having sealed his letter with great rapidity, was, indeed, ready, and had even a hurried, agitated air, which showed impatience to be gone. Anne knew not how to understand it. She had the kindest ‘Good morning! God bless you!’ from Captain Harville, but from him not a word nor a look! He had passed out of the room without a look!

“She had only time, however, to move closer to the table where he had been writing, when footsteps were heard entering; the door opened, it was himself. He begged their pardon, but he had forgotten his gloves; and instantly crossing the room to the writing-table, and standing with his back towards Mrs. Musgrove, he drew out a letter from under the scattered papers, placed it before Anne with eyes of glowing entreaty fixed on her, and hastily collecting his gloves, was again out of the room, almost before Mrs. Musgrove was aware of his being in it; the work of an instant!

“The revolution which one instant had made in Anne was almost beyond expression. The letter, with a direction hardly legible, ‘to Miss A. E——’ was evidently the one which he had been folding so hastily. While supposed to be writing only to Captain Benwick he had been also addressing her! On the contents of that letter depended all which this world could do for her! Anything was possible, anything might be defied rather than suspense. Mrs. Musgrove had little arrangements of her own at her own table; to their protection she must trust, and sinking into the chair which he had occupied, succeeding to the very spot where he had leaned and written, her eyes devoured the following words:—

“‘I can listen no longer in silence. I must speak to you by such means as are within my reach. You pierce my soul. I am half agony, half hope. Tell me not that I am too late, that such precious feelings are gone for ever. I offer myself to you again, with a heart even more your own than when you almost broke it, eight years and a half ago. Dare not say that man forgets sooner than woman, that his love has an earlier death! I have loved none but you. Unjust I may have been, weak and resentful I have been, but never inconstant. You alone have brought me to Bath. For you alone I think and plan. Have you not seen this? Can you fail to have understood my wishes? I had not waited even these ten days, could I have read your feelings as I think you must have penetrated mine. I can hardly write. I am every instant hearing something which overpowers me. You sink your voice, but I can distinguish the tones of that voice when they would be lost on others. Too good, too excellent creature! You do us justice, indeed. You do believe that there is true attachment and constancy among men. Believe it to be most permanent, most undeviating in F. W.

“‘I must go uncertain of my fate, but I shall return hither or follow your party as soon as possible. A word,

a look will be enough to decide whether I enter your father's house this evening or never.'”*

Such a letter is not soon to be recovered from. Anne has to plead illness, and is forced to accept her brother-in-law's escort home.

“They were in Union Street, when a quicker step behind, a something of familiar sound, gave her two moments' preparation for the sight of Captain Wentworth. He joined them, but as if irresolute whether to join or pass on, said nothing, only looked. Anne could command herself enough to receive that look and not repulsively. The cheeks which had been pale now glowed, and the movements which had hesitated were decided. He walked by her side. Presently, struck by a sudden thought, Charles said—

“‘Captain Wentworth, which way are you going? Only to Gay Street, or farther up the town?’

“‘I hardly know,’ replied Captain Wentworth, surprised.

“‘Are you going as high as Belmont? Are you going near Camden Place? Because if you are, I shall have no scruple in asking you to take my place, and give Anne your arm to her father's door. She is rather done for this morning, and must not go so far without help, and I ought to be at that fellow's in the Market Place. He promised me the sight of a capital gun he is just going to send off; said he would keep it unpacked to the last possible moment, that I might see it; and if I do not turn back now, I have no chance. By his description it is a good deal like the second-sized

* The renewal of the good understanding between Anne and Captain Wentworth was contrived in the cancelled chapter of the story, with much less spirit and feeling—as Jane Austen herself judged rightly—by an accidental interview between the lovers in the Crofts' lodgings; in the course of which Admiral Croft unsuspectingly imposes on his brother-in-law the trying task of conveying to Anne, Admiral and Mrs. Croft's friendly desire not to stand in the way of the arrangements of Mr. Elliot and his cousin on their marriage; on the contrary, the Crofts offer to vacate Kellynch to them if they wish it.

double-barrel of mine which you shot with one day round Winthrop.' *

"There could be no objection. There could only be a most proper alacrity, a most obliging compliance for public view; and smiles reined in and spirits dancing in private rapture. In half a minute Charles was at the bottom of Union Street again, and the other two proceeding together; and soon words enough had passed between them to decide their direction towards the comparatively quiet and retired gravel walk, where the power of conversation would make the present hour a blessing indeed, and prepare it for all the immortality which the happiest recollections of their own future life could bestow. There they exchanged again those feelings and those promises which had once before seemed to secure everything, but which had been followed by so many, many years of division and estrangement. There they returned again into the past, more exquisitely happy, perhaps, in their re-union than when it had been first projected; more tender, more tried, more fixed in a knowledge of each other's character, truth, and attachment; more equal to act, more justified in acting. And there, as they slowly paced the gradual ascent, heedless of every group around them, all the little variations of the last week were gone through, and of yesterday and to-day there could scarcely be an end.

"At last Anne was at home again, happier than any one in that house could have conceived.

"The evening came, the drawing-rooms were lighted up, the company assembled. It was but a card party;

* In the intense sense of reality which all Jane Austen's stories give us, we are prompted here to go beyond what the author has chosen to tell us, and speculate how the Musgroves, great and small, received the news—not merely of Captain Wentworth and Anne Elliot's engagement, but what they were sure to hear also, sooner or later, that it was the end of an old attachment, utterly unsuspected by all their friends at Uppercross. Would the Musgroves in their good nature content themselves with thinking the couple had kept their secret well, or would there be a general, slightly indignant sense of having been taken in and humbugged, like, in its degree, to that which Emma Woodhouse experienced when she learnt the long-standing engagement between Frank Churchill and Jane Fairfax?

it was but a mixture of those who had never met before, and those who had met too often; a commonplace business, too numerous for intimacy, too small for variety; but Anne had never found an evening shorter. Glowing and lovely in sensibility and happiness, and more generally admired than she thought about or cared for, she had cheerful or forbearing feelings for every creature around her; with Captain Wentworth some moments of communication constantly occurring and always the hope of more, and always the knowledge of his being there.

“It was in one of these short meetings, each apparently occupied in admiring a fine display of greenhouse plants, that she told him, with that candour and fairness to herself and everybody which no passion, and no submission to his influence could warp :

“ ‘I have been thinking over the past, and I must believe that I am right, much as I suffered from it, in being guided by the friend who to me was in the place of a parent. Do not mistake me, however. I am not saying she did not err in her advice. I mean I was right in submitting to it; and if I mistake not, a strong sense of duty is no bad part of a woman’s portion.’ *

“He looked at her, looked at Lady Russell, and looking again at her, replied as if in cool deliberation, ‘Not yet. But there are hopes of her being forgiven in time. But I, too, have been thinking over the past, and a question has suggested itself, whether there may not have been one person more my enemy even than that lady. My own self. Tell me, if when I returned to England in the year ’eight, with a few thousand pounds,† and was posted into the *Laconia*, if I had then written to you, would you have answered my letter? Would you, in short, have renewed the engagement then?’

“ ‘Would I?’ was all her answer; but the accent was decisive.

* No, indeed, it is her chief treasure.

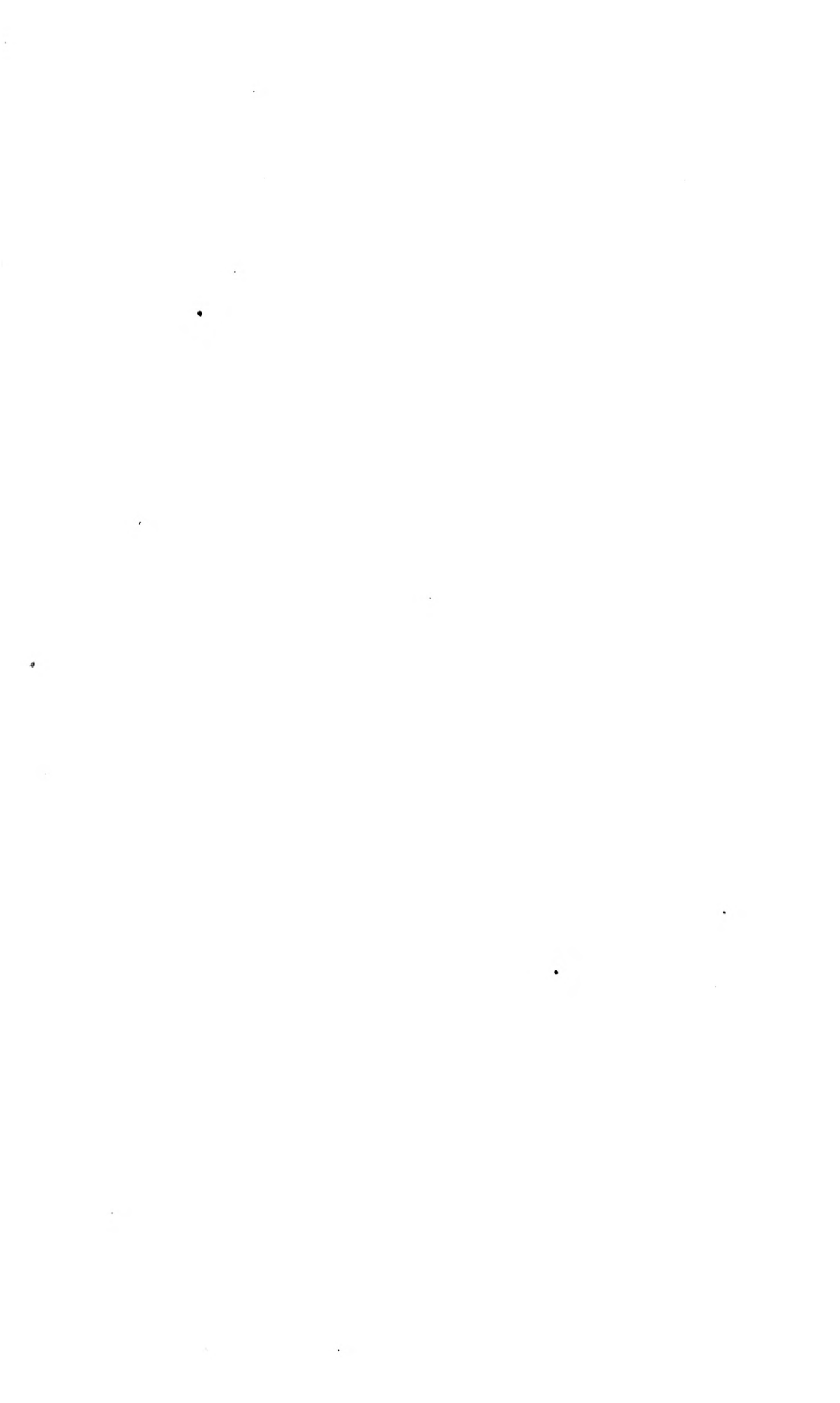
† These were the very different days of frequent naval engagements and much prize money.

“‘Good God!’ he cried, ‘you would! It is not that I did not think of it, or desire it, as what could alone crown all my other success; but I was proud, too proud to ask again. I did not understand you. Six years of separation and suffering might have been spared. I have been used to the gratification of believing myself to earn every blessing that I enjoyed. I have valued myself on honourable toils and just rewards. Like other great men under reverses,’ he added, with a smile, ‘I must learn to brook being happier than I deserve.’”

“Who can doubt what followed?” Jane Austen begins the last chapter. Sir Walter made no objection, and Elizabeth did nothing worse than look cold and unconcerned. Captain Wentworth, with five-and-twenty thousand pounds, and as high in his profession as merit and activity could place him, was no longer a nobody.

Among other results of the marriage, Lady Russell learnt to like the man who made Anne Elliot happy. Captain Wentworth became the cordial and helpful friend of Mrs. Smith. Mr. Elliot, who had been playing a deep game, withdrew from Bath, and caused Mrs. Clay to withdraw also. She gave up Sir Walter, for the sake of his heir. It remained doubtful whether her cunning was not more than a match for his, and whether, in losing the chance of becoming the wife of Sir Walter, she might not wheedle the future Sir William into raising her into the position of Lady Elliot.

It would be impertinent to add a word of praise to a novel which—while it is often as penetrating and unerring in discussing the motives, and as richly humorous in dealing with the absurdities and follies of human nature as “*Pride and Prejudice*” and “*Northanger Abbey*”—has a gentle grace and a pathetic feeling all its own, so far as Jane Austen’s novels are concerned. The last warm words of praise to the gallant profession to which two of her brothers belonged, is another testimony to her keen family sympathies, as well as to her quick, womanly response to all that was patriotic and heroic.



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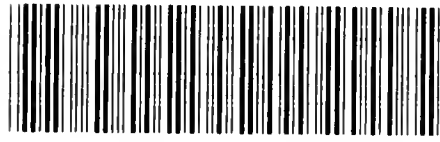
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